THE COLOCON FEMALE by Charles V. De Vet

FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION

APRIL 1960

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DO IT YOURSELF by Miriam Allen de Ford

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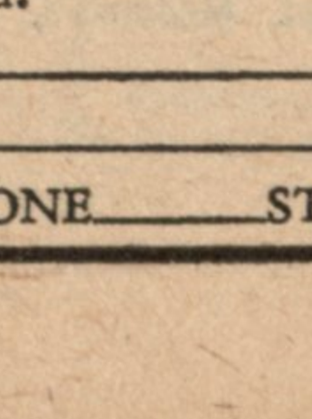

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FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION

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• *NOVELETS*

• *SHORT STORIES*

• *DEPARTMENTS*

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The "chum" wasn't supposed to give its user any special abilities, but just bring forward latent talents. And Prahl certainly needed extra talents when his rookie assignment turned out to be one which would tax an experienced agent!

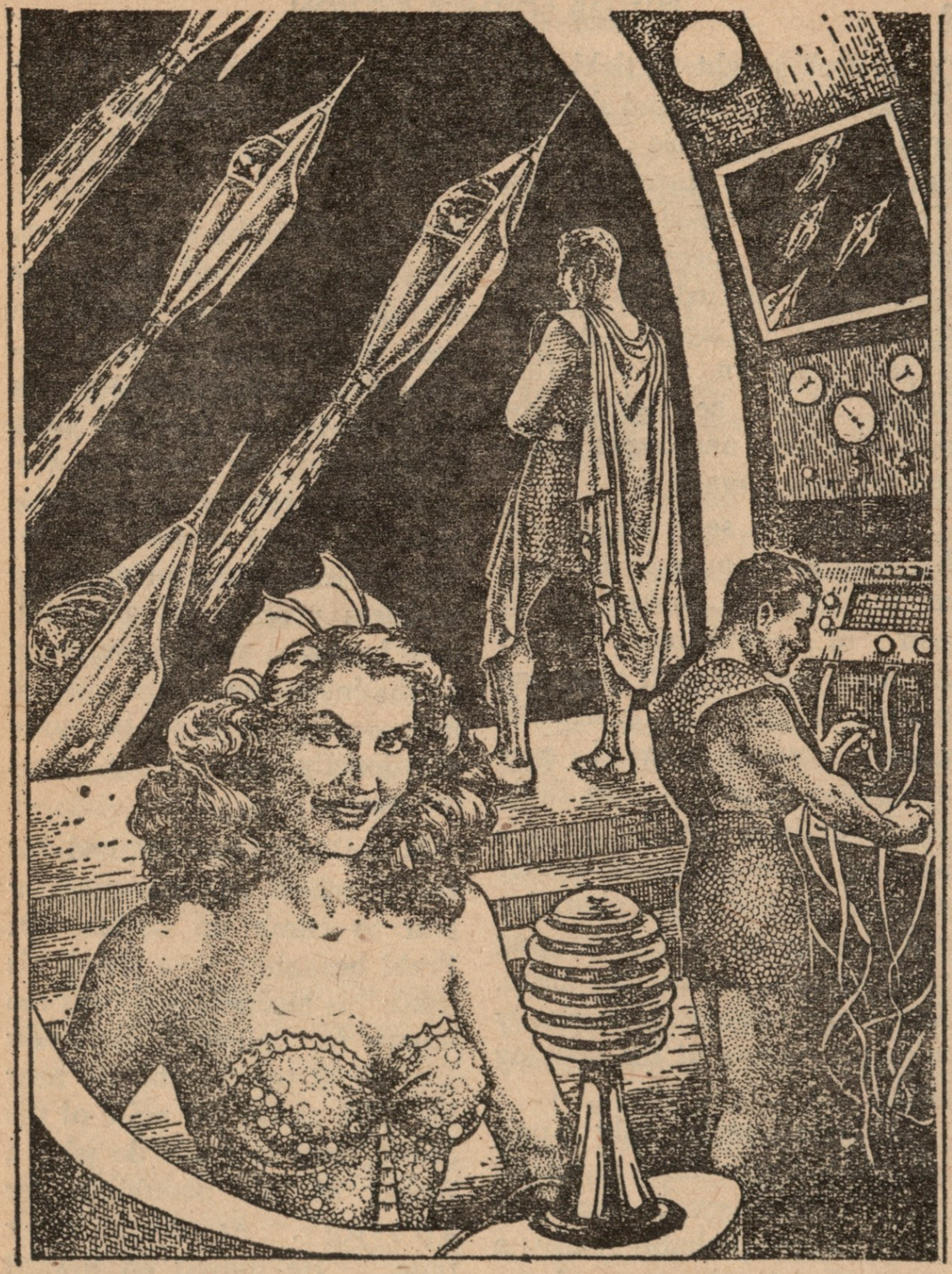
The Colocon Female

Novelet by Charles V. De Vet

GEORGE PRAHL perspired gently as he treaded his way purposefully through the jostling carnival crowd. The day was not particularly hot, his handbag was not heavy—he was traveling with a minimum of luggage and personal effects—but he couldn't banish his sense of exposure. When a GS agent's first assignment involves chasing an enemy spy into the enemy's own territory, there were few minutes that did not ride heavy on his shoulders.

He would be glad when he found a hotel with an available room. Once he was able to nestle the Chum in the palm of his hand, he would feel safer. He would *be* safer.

He pulled back his head to avoid the feathers of a fan with which a blue-gowned



There had been girls at the training station, but they couldn't prepare Prahl for the females he'd meet on other worlds . . .

"coquette" sought to tickle his cheek. She laughed and shouted something inaudible in the hubbub of the merrymakers. Three clowns reeled drunkenly past, brushing heavily against him. Prahl shifted his weight to keep his footing, and pushed a few stubborn steps farther along. Ahead he sighted the sign of a hotel and began working his way toward it.

A banstree seed pinged off his head and landed in the dust at his feet. He looked up. A pair of exquisitely shaped feminine legs, shaded pink and orange, caught his gaze. His glance traveled upward, over more smooth pink-orange flesh, until captured by the expression of good-humored banter on the face of the aborigine girl sitting on a low-hanging tree branch above his head. Her body swayed rhythmically with the motion of the bobbing limb.

She was wearing only a pair of tight briefs and a scanty bra, Prahl observed. And even those were probably only a concession to the laws of the humans who governed this colony city. The natives had none of the human clothes fetishes, if he remembered correctly what he had read about them.

THIS WAS the first Colocon female he had seen; his excursion ship had landed on this World only an hour before. The reports he had gotten of their beauty had not been exaggerated, he decided. Despite the urgency of his mission, he found himself returning her smile, unmindful of the revellers pushing on all sides, and feeling a mild stimulation at the invitation in her eyes. A man would have to be quite emotionally prosaic to react otherwise.

When she saw she had his full attention, she motioned for him to climb up beside her. Prahl hesitated, then shook his head; his business here was too urgent for dalliance. He knew she would not be able to hear his voice above the noise of the crowd, and he made do with a lifting of his shoulders for apology. At some other time... He moved on toward the hotel.

At the entrance he noted with oblique attention a fat

man, with long, unkempt hair and a white painted-on face, dozing in the shade. Prahl went inside.

The clerk at the desk in the lobby saw him coming and shook his head regretfully. He was a tall man, well past middle age, with a mole on the right side of his chin, from which three hairs bristled whitely.

PRAHL IGNORED the obvious refusal and set his bag on the floor. "I need a room badly," he said. He took a twenty annizio bill from his pocketbook and laid it on the brightly lacquered counter. "If you've got anything at all that you can let me have, I'd appreciate it."

The clerk regarded the money thoughtfully. He shifted his attention to Prahl and weighed him with a brief appraisal. "We're filled," he said sincerely. "Really filled. However, if Merseen would care to share my room..." He added, "I will be using it only from the hours of twelve to six, when it will be necessary that I sleep."

Prahl made his quick decision. "Done," he said. "I'll try to be out when you need it."

The clerk took a key from his belt and laid it on the counter, picking up the money with the return movement of his hand. "It's the small room just off the mezzanine," he said. "It's not numbered, but you won't have any trouble finding it."

Prahl nodded and took the key. There was no elevator, he saw. He walked the short flight of stairs to the balcony.

PRAHL LET himself into the bedroom with his key and looked about him. A bed; a studio couch against the far wall; a chest of drawers with a mirror hanging precariously above it; two chairs, and a night stand at the head of the bed were the only furnishings. A doorway beside the studio couch led into a small lavatory.

He set his grip on the room's single bed and unlocked it. Opening the lid, he reached inside and ran his fingers lightly along the thick bottom section. He found the spot he sought and pulled back a strip of cloth binding, exposing a narrow compartment. A hollow

block of wood, somewhat resembling a flattened walnut, slid out.

Taking the small disk in one hand Prahl curled his fingers about it caressingly. Only then did he allow himself to relax. He sagged down onto the bed and let his breath out in a long sigh. On this job being able to relax was a rare luxury.

After a minute, Prahl sat up and held himself in a posture of listening. Once again he experienced the vast comfort of the Chum. It was a physical and mental stimulation to feel it begin its work. His brain seemed to quicken, to become sharply alert; more, it acquired a new power—not definite and sharp, as with the normal senses, but undeniably there. There was a feeling, also, of yet more behind that, waiting to be quickened.

He let his new sense expand, let it reach out, like a sensitive antenna, until it touched the thin walls of the room, and crowded through.

STRAIGHT ahead was another bedroom, his newly-awakened faculty discerned. After a minute, he satisfied himself that it was empty, and swung his attention to a second bedroom to his right. It was occupied by one person, probably a man, sleeping. Without hearing, Prahl knew that he snored softly.

To his left was the mezzanine, and at his back a window. He went over to it and looked out. It opened on a rectangular courtyard, with a small roof extending perhaps ten feet out from the window.

At last he was certain that no danger awaited him here, and he turned again to his traveling bag. He was tired, but he had to begin work without delay. The Kreek had already been in the city two days. He would have to begin his tracking before the spy had more time to cover his trail; it would already be difficult. He glanced at his wrist watch. Twelve minutes to noon. The register clerk would be needing his room shortly.

From his suitcase Prahl took the male temple-dancer outfit he had bought on his way from the spaceport. He stripped, shook out the greenish-pink suit, and slipped it on.

It was porous elastic and fit-

ted his flat-muscled frame snugly. The tight combination mask and cap flattened his hair to his head, but could not completely hide the bulge of his ears. As a disguise it was inadequate—no one would mistake him for an aborigine—but as a carnival costume it would do very nicely.

He put his hotel key in the pouch hung about his neck, native fashion, and slid the Chum into a pocket on his right hip. His billfold fitted neatly into a small breast pocket.

When he left his room he kept his hand curled lightly around the Chum.

ON THE HOTEL veranda, Prahl stood for a minute observing the carnival crowd as it milled about a troop of acrobats tumbling in the street. He felt a hand diffidently touch his arm, and turned to face the fat man he noticed sleeping in front of the hotel when he entered.

"Does Merseen wish a guide?" the man asked. His voice had a slight lisping accent. "My rates are very reasonable." He watched Prahl's apparent hesitation. "What does Merseen desire? Excitement? Women? Perhaps a native woman?"

Prahl noted the white mask painted on the man's face, with its accented eyebrows and exaggerated mouth width; his shaggy gray hair that grew down on his neck and both sides of his head. In his pocket he rolled the Chum about in the palm of his hand.

Nothing.

Which was unusual.

There was always some evidence of emotion, even though usually minor, when two persons conversed. Yet he could not catch nothing from the fat man; not even a hint of avarice. He probably would make a trustworthy guide. However, right now Prahl did not want one. He shook his head and excused himself as he moved away.

WITHOUT realizing where he was heading, he soon found himself back near the tree where he had seen the aborigine girl. She was still on her limb. She had stopped swaying now, and was sitting with her head back, probing

the crowd intently.

Prahl noted that her thin nostrils alternately flared and relaxed, as her breast rose and fell with her deep breathing. He remembered then that her race was supposed to have a keener sense of scent than even the wild animals of Earth. He was glad he had taken advantage of the dead time on the trip in to read up on this World in the ship's library.

The girl had located the object of her quest. Himself.

His disguise had not served him there; he saw her beckon and pretended not to notice, to be looking beyond her. He started to move on, keeping her in view from the side of his eye. She grasped a limb above her head and pulled herself lithely up. The movement had all the innate grace of a cat. The fact was, hers was supposed to be a race biologically related to the Colocon species of cat.

Prahl stopped and watched her come nimbly down the tree. He was near enough to see that her hands were prehensile, yet with claws that came out of their sheaths each time she grasped the tree bark. She would be a dangerous animal if aroused.

With mild amazement, Prahl realized that once again his blood was stirring with the excitement he had experienced at his first sight of her. And mingled with the excitement was a vague apprehension; he smiled at the sudden knowledge that he was afraid of her.

He couldn't allow himself any diversion now, he decided. He turned and pushed his way deeper into the crowd. Ahead, a man in a white uniform—apparently one of the local police—was stopping passersby and examining identity cards. He hadn't expected that. He had not applied for a regulation visitor's permit, because then he would have had to answer questions. On a World that had been colonized by Broznia—Earth's foremost rival for leadership in the human Ten Thousand Worlds—he would receive no cooperation, if they learned who he was, and what he was doing here. Rather, he could be certain of opposition. That opposition might easily extend to their deciding to kill him—and never admitting it later, of course. As yet there

had been no actual shooting between Broznia and her allies, and Earth and hers; but for all practical purposes they were at war.

PRAHL'S attention had been diverted in too many directions. As he turned to avoid being stopped by the police officer, he found himself face-to-face with the pink skinned native girl.

She was smiling, her pointed teeth detracting not at all from her sleek comeliness. At this close view, he saw that her eyes were green, and flecked with gold that seemed to reflect the sunlight. Her hair was bright orange and hung in billowing waves to her shoulders. Prahl stood wide-eyed, caught up in the spell of her flamboyant femininity.

He noticed that her lips were moving, and he strained to hear what she said. She was making no sound; he remembered then that her race was mute. Yet she was trying to get some message across to him.

A moment later he remembered something else—and felt an abrupt rush of blood to his cheeks.

Communication between the Colocons and humans consisted mostly of signs and gestures; among themselves they communicated also by means of scent.

The girl was close to him now, her delicately-tinted flesh moist in the hot sun. To Prahl's nostrils came the aroma of a meadow in bloom, of green tea, of leaves in the rain, of wind—and musk.

The scent, as he remembered reading it, of a Colocon female indicating her desire to mate.

II

THE PULSING of Prahl's blood seemed to concentrate in a throb of the artery at the base of his throat. And once again he found himself afraid. There was so much potentially savage woman here...

"Your card, Merseen?" The words, coming from Prahl's right, were almost welcome. He turned to face the white-clad policeman who waited patiently at his side.

While he racked his mind Prahl made a pretense of examining his pockets. He could

think of no good way out of the predicament. "I'm afraid..." he began.

"Pardon me." A now familiar lisp came from his left, and Prahl turned again. It was the fat man from the hotel. "I believe Merseen dropped this."

With purely automatic response, Prahl took the slip of thin pasteboard the other extended—a visitor's identity card, he saw. He handed it to the policeman and turned to thank the fat man. He was just in time to see him disappear into the crowd. He noted then that the aborigine girl had vanished also.

The policeman studied the permit for a minute, and was entirely satsified. "I believe Merseen's time-allotment has expired," he explained with professional courtesy. "A half block down this street," he continued, "a booth has been set up for the convenience of off-world visitors. If you will apply there, I'.n sure they will extend your visa without question." He made a note in a small book.

Prahl thanked him and started in the direction he had indicated.

He did not go to the registration booth, however; he'd have to risk being able to avoid the police until he'd finished his job. The Broznian agent had to be traced before he got away —or the city authorities found him. He suspected that by this time they would have learned of both their presences on Colocon. He was banking heavily on the agent not wanting to relay his information through the rulers here; there were many twistings and connivings in interworld politics, even among allies.

PRAHL ATE a hasty lunch at an open air counter and spent the remainder of the afternoon searching for the Broznian agent. It proved more difficult than he had expected. The agent, though working for the Broznians, was a member of the nonhuman Kreeks; he should not be too hard to find.

The Kreek race was humanoid, much similar in make-up to that of humans, but with enough differences to be detected by a man alerted for them. Their outstanding characteristics were big-bellied bodies, thin, bony limbs, and

thick cartilaged ears. Prahl should have no difficulty spotting this one, probably unique on this world, even in a crowd. However, the carnival was proving a distinct handicap; with nearly everyone in costume, finding even a nonhuman was not simple. Also, the Kreek's powers of simulation might be greater than he had anticipated.

The Kreeks made superb spies. They were masters at sneak thievery; they had a natural affinity for concealment, a vast patience, and a facility for picking locks that amounted almost to magic. Theses had been written on how they did it, but the facility could not be duplicated by Earthmen.

THIS PARTICULAR Kreek had robbed a GS courier, and by a stroke of luck or foreknowledge, obtained a list of the names of all Earth's major agents on the Broznian Worlds. He had been traced away on an excursion ship quickly, but he managed to get bund for Colocon, and loaded with visitors to the hundredth anniversary celebration of that World's colonization.

If the agent reached his destination with his stolen list, it would amount to a major disaster for Earth; it would undoubtedly give the Broznians sufficient information and confidence to risk open warfare.

And Prahl's time was limited; the next ship left the following night for Broznia, with an Earth ship leaving less than an hour later. If he did not find the Kreek before then, he would be too late—though he intended to book passage on the Broznian vessel, if necessary, in the hope of cornering his quarry during flight. He had been ordered to take any risks necessary. A GS agent was expendable in a matter as vital as this; he hoped he had been right in his surmise that the spy intended to report directly to the men who had hired him, or he would already be on a forlorn chase.

By the time the shadows of evening began to lengthen over the crowded streets, Prahl had become quite discouraged. His task was much like looking for the proverbial needle; perhaps an experienced agent would

know better what to do. Personally, he felt himself at a dead end. Further, by now he was tired to the point of exhaustion. His best course would be to get some sleep, and begin his search again tomorrow, after he'd rested.

PRAHL RETURNED to the hotel and the clerk who had given him his room that morning stopped him in the lobby. "I hope I'm not inconveniencing you," he said apologetically, "but another visitor...desperate for a room...just as you were..." He spread his hands wide, in a gesture of mutual understanding. "I rented him the couch in our room. It will be only for this one night; I hope you don't mind?"

Prahl's first impulse was to protest, but then he thought better of it. He couldn't risk losing his own place to sleep; and the Chum in his hand told him that the clerk was up to no mischief. He grunted noncommittally and went on to his room.

The man on the couch was breathing heavily, with his mouth open; the chum indicated that his sleeping was not feigned. Prahl walked softly to the side of the sleeper and looked down. One corner of the blanket had fallen over his face, partly covering it. About all that showed were his chin and mouth, and a thatch of hair, looking vaguely the color of port wine in the dim light coming from the shaded night lamp on the chest of drawers. However, Prahl could see enough to be sure that he was human.

The room was warm and close, and Prahl went to the window and raised it quietly. He returned to his bed and undressed. When he crawled between the sheets, the Chum was in his hand. He set his mind to awaken whenever his roommate left his berth.

PRAHL HAD no certainty that the Chum could do the job—he was still pretty much in the trial stage where its use was concerned. But it seemed a likely experiment.

It was an amazing instrument. It had been introduced by a GS executive named Zarwell, near the completion of his agent's training course a month before.

"What I am about to show you now is something new in this course," Zarwell had begun. "However, the principle is not new. For thousands of years, it has been known that the subconscious has many abilities beyond those of the five senses utilized by the conscious mind. Many authenticated cases of the display of these unusual powers are on record.

"Yet, despite considerable investigation, the understanding of those latent abilities still escapes us. We, in our service, have a more pragmatic reason for wishing to learn more about them; we would like to be able to make use of them in our work. Our researchers have turned, therefore, from efforts at understanding, to a search for means of stimulating them. That is, a way to bring them out where they can be utilized—regardless of how or why they operate.

"This," Zarwell held up a Chum, "is the first breakthrough. Demonstration being better than any number of words, with your permission, I will proceed with an exhibition we have prepared."

THE DISPLAY that followed fascinated Prahl and the other forty odd student agents present. They saw demonstrated a limited telepathy and precognition; the moving of articles of furniture, apparently through the functioning of mind power only; and one expositer had even been able to levitate. He had transported himself from place to place in the huge auditorium instantaneously.

"There would be nothing to be gained by having these men, who have demonstrated their unusual abilities, speak with you," Zarwell said, after the show was over. "That would be merely a pursuit of the avenue of investigation that has always proven fruitless; they cannot tell you how they do it.

"Now, this is what we want you to do. Take the Chums we're going to issue each of you, and see if there are any hidden abilities within yourselves. Most people have them, we believe. You, because of the occupation for which you have shown facility, should rate higher than average. You probably won't find more than one latent ability; some of you

won't find any. That is the way it has always been—few subjects ever uncover more than one buried power. But those of you who succeed, will as a result, be immeasureably more valuable agents. And may in the process advance the study of the field.

"Concentrate on anything that comes to mind during the next days," Zarwell concluded, "with the Chum somewhere in contact with your body—probably in the palm of your hand. In time something may come up. You know now that it is possible, and that you have the tool you need to make it actual. Do your best!"

TWO WEEKS passed before Prahl discovered within himself the ability to catch the emotions of those about him—more pronounced when they directly concerned him. The GS executives had been definitely interested.

However, a week later the courier had been robbed by the Broznian agent, and every available man, even students, had been set to tracking him down. Prahl succeeded in trailing him to a spaceport, and learning that he had left for Colocon two days before.

He reported to headquarters by phone, and was told to take passage on the next ship for Colocon, leaving within the hour. He barely had time to pack a bag. Other agents would be sent to help him as soon as possible—of course, as it developed, that help would not arrive until too late. He had to get the Kreek by himself.

III

PRAHL WAS not aware that he had dropped off to sleep until he found himself wide awake, listening to his room's other tenant as he crawled from his bed. Whether it was the Chum that had roused him, or a normal awakening caused by the other's small noises, he did not know.

The Chum caught only mild curiosity-fluctuations from the man. Prahl lay motionless, with his eyes closed, until the other had dressed, toileted, and left the room.

This time he did not get back to sleep before he was disturbed again. A key grated

in the door lock and it opened. Two men entered. One of them snapped on the room light as Prahl sat up.

The Chum was reacting stridently, jarring his nerves like a throbbing pain. These men represented danger—as great a danger as ever detected by the instrument.

Prahl experienced an instant of acute self-diagnosis. This was his first exposure to an enemy who would be subject to no restraint in his actions. A man is often a creature of the conventions of the culture in which he moves. He believes himself brave; he will fight unhesitatingly when his honor is challenged. But in the back of his mind is the assurance that his challenger, too, is bound by those conventions. His opponent will go only so far in the fight, or spectators will step in, the police will arrive. The danger is limited.

Just how brave would he be if he knew the enemy recognized no restrictions? That the end result might be his death. Prahl was glad to note that he was unafraid.

"Get dressed," one of his intruders commanded and the instant of self-diagnosis was over. The speaker was a big man, in his muscular prime, arrogant and sure of himself. He had a shiny dark complexion, and a short beard that covered only his chin. Behind him was a policeman. Prahl recognized the officer who had checked his identity card the day before. He threw back the blankets of the bed and reached for his trousers.

THE POLICE officer took up a position near the door; the big man pulled over one of the room's two chairs and sat down facing Prahl. "My name is Swanson," he said. "My title does not matter, but you may assume that I am a high official in Colocon's government. I would like to ask you a few questions, Merseen Prahl." Though his words were polite, his manner was not.

Prahl continued dressing. "Go ahead," he said.

"Have you found your man yet?" Swanson asked.

"I beg your pardon?" Prahl raised his eyebrows inquiringly.

"Don't play games with me,

Prahl," Swanson grated, with an impatience that verged on ferocity. He was not a gentle man, Prahl decided.

"Just what man do you have in mind?" he asked carefully. "I am here simply. . ."

"I know. I know," Swanson interrupted irritably. "You're just a tourist; you don't know what I'm talking about." He folded one hand into a fist and wrapped the other hand about it, making the knuckles crack. "Don't try that story on me. I know who you are, and what you're doing here. I'll ask you once more: Have you found your man yet?"

Prahl risked a second question while he stalled for time. "How did you find out what you think you know about me?"

Swanson bared his teeth in a smile that displayed no humor. "You weren't very smart," he said. "Using a permit with an expired time limit, which would be certain to be checked—and found to be a forgery. How we worked from there is our own business. Your only concern right now is to talk."

So the fat guide had not been as helpful as he had thought, Prahl reflected.

THERE WERE times when a man had to gamble on the rise and fall of a card, to place his bets, and make his play on whatever came up. "Now was one of those times. "I haven't found him yet," he said.

"For your sake, I hope you're lying," Swanson said conversationally, "and that you have the good sense to change your story." He tilted his chair back until his shoulders rested against the wall. "I'll be entirely honest with you, Merseen," he said. "Perhaps then you will see why you have no other choice than to tell the truth."

He stroked his beard thoughtfully, as though considering the phrasing of his next words. "We want that Kreek almost as badly as you do," he said. "We're a backwater World, Merseen Prahl. With that list in our hands, we can bargain with Broznia for better trade concessions, for more financial assistance, for all the innumerable things a new World needs. And which a

mother World is often reluctant to provide.

"Now listen to this carefully, because it is vital to your well-being. If you continue to insist that you have not found the Kreek, whether or not you're telling the truth, you are of no use to us. But you might still succeed in getting to him, if we let you go. Either way, it is to our advantage that you be, ah, eliminated. On the other hand, if you can take us to him, you will be in a position to bargain—to induce us to spare your life." He waited.

He had stated it very logically. Prahl closed the last snap on his blouse. "I'll take you to him," he said. He bent and rebuckled his left shoe.

"Good." Swanson rose from his chair.

PRAHL HALF-STRAIGHTENED from his crouched position, hurled himself forward and caught the big man in the stomach with his shoulder. His rush carried him the few feet across the room and was stopped when Swanson crashed against the wall. The breath exploded from his lungs in a grunt of agony.

Prahl let the slack body fall to the floor and pivoted to face the startled officer. His gun was part-way out of his chest holster when Prahl's fist landed on the side of his jaw. The policeman swayed once, with his hand frozen on the gun-butt, took a staggering step back, and Prahl struck him twice more on the face before he fell.

Prahl wheeled and strode toward the open window. On the way he turned his head, and saw that Swanson had already pulled himself to his knees, was using the couch now to support him as he struggled to regain his feet. The big man was tough.

Prahl dived through the open window.

He rolled over twice on the small roof before he was able to check himself and climb to his feet. Quickly he glanced toward the ground. The distance was too great to risk jumping. Did he have time to find a way to climb down?

Something moved against the dark background of the building to his left. He swung around and set himself. Pink-orange flesh showed dully in

the light coming through the window.

The aborigine girl.

HOW LONG had she been out here? he wondered. With the light at her back, he could not make out her features as she came toward him. All he could see was the gleam of her teeth as she smiled.

The chances were that she would help rather than hinder him, he decided quickly. But what could she do? He saw that she was pointing toward the ground, and she urged him nearer the roof edge with a nudge of her shoulder. Evidently she wanted him to jump.

Prahl looked down again, and shook his head. From behind them came an angry shout.

With a swift and abrupt shift of her body the cat-girl caught Prahl by one arm and swung him off his feet and onto her shoulders. Before he could resist, she slid over the roof edge; for a moment she hung by one hand, then let herself drop.

She landed lightly, letting Prahl's feet touch the ground at the same instant and holding him erect. He was still getting back his breath, and recovering his lost poise, when she grabbed him by one hand and led him to a small doorway leading from the courtyard. They stepped through into a rear alley and the girl pulled him into an ambling run. She retained her hold on his hand and increased her pace. Prahl had to lengthen his stride to keep up with her. A few minutes from the time they left the hotel, they entered an older, unlit section of the city.

The girl slowed to a fast walk, and Prahl took advantage of the break to look about him. The buildings here were of wood and stone, apparently constructed by the early colonists, but all were deserted. He had not gone far before he recalled enough of his learned facts to know the reason.

SLANTING outward from every building, on all sides, were black shapes like flat half-tents. Prahl touched one in passing and found it solid but yielding to the pressure of his hand. These were the

dwellings of the native cat race.

Most of the aborigines—again as he had read—carried in the pouches about their necks the quick hardening sap of a rubber-type tree. With their hands they built thin-walled, yet firm shelters wherever they chose to stop, whether for only a night, or for longer. They never bothered to move or remove their dwellings when they decided to leave; it was too simple just to build another.

When the Broznian colonists settled on Colocon they found these native aborigines quite friendly, but curious and extremely sensitive to affront. Considering their physical propensities, the better part of valor had been for the colonists to do their best to remain on good terms.

During the early days, the aborigines had come in great numbers to satisfy their curiosity. Some stayed for long periods. They built their rubber dwellings against the stone and wooden walls of the humans, and presented them with a delicate problem.

The aborigines never seemed to understand or care that they made the human dwellings untenable. They had no objection to the colonists tearing down a rubber home—if the cat denizen had decided he no longer wanted it. If he had not decided that, the act was a deadly insult. Many colonists, and some cat people had died as a result of the first misunderstandings. The aborigines' activity soon grew from a nuisance to a situation that required a solution.

In time there were enough rubber huts in the settlement to house as many natives as ever appeared at one time. But few of the human dwellings were usable. The colonists eventually, after long effort, arrived at a working agreement with their visitors. They would move to a new site, at the edge of the original location, and the cats would stay in the old settlement. The solution ended most of the trouble.

THE ABORIGINE girl stopped to peer into rubber huts several times as they went on. Either she was greeted by spitting hisses, or she deter-

mined for herself that they were occupied. Finally she found one not already taken, and they went in.

The place was in near total darkness. Prahl lit a match. All that was visible was a pile of leaves in one corner, and the glint of the girl's cat eyes. The match went out. She indicated by gentle forcing that he was to lie down. He obeyed.

Prahl had time then to consider his new situation—and its ramifications. At the end he was not happy. Though he was still certain the girl meant him no harm, what was to come next left room for a great deal of conjecture—and uneasiness.

His thoughts were interrupted by the feel of the girl's body being eased down beside him. A minute passed and he caught the scent he had noted back on the city street. Some instinct told him that it emanated from the pores of her flesh. The air within the hut seemed to become heavy and stifling, and he had trouble pulling it into his lungs.

What did he do now? His reason told him that to try to leave might prove foolhardy. He knew of the cats' sensitivity, and such an attempt might very well be a grevious offense. With disastrous results for him. Yet to stay...

HE FELT a hand creep gently over his shoulder and across his blouse front. Its fingers twined firmly into the material. Her other hand closed beside the first. Her fists tightened, twisted inexorably, and the fabric of his blouse parted and ripped down to his waist.

Prahl experienced an enervating sense of futility and helplessness; he had not felt quite like this since he had been a child. The situation, viewed objectively, was ridiculous, of course. Being involved in it left him with no sense of the humor of the thing. And another emotion intruded on his thoughts.

He was a man, and she a woman, despite her alienness.

Her hands had returned and rested warmly against his chest, the heat of her body seeming to pass through them into his own flesh. He turned, remembering with a part of his mind that seemed to stand aside and view the situation with sar-

donic amusement, that the hair of these people was a major sensory area.

He ran his palms along the sides of her head, over the flat surfaces where a human's ears would have been, and through the thick hair. From the girl's throat came a soft yarr.

A short while later the night became very still, as though the realities in which he moved had paused. From outside came the sharp chitter of a Colocon cricket. It sounded unusually loud in Prahl's ears. As the minutes passed inside the hut the chirping seemed to swell in volume, building up to a crashing crescendo. Yet all the while Prahl was fully aware that the swelling tide of volume was in his own mind only.

IV

THE NEXT morning, Prahl awoke and lay for a full minute before he could recall where he was. When he remembered, he turned his head and saw that the aborigine girl was no longer in the shelter. For a time he was too relaxed to wonder about it. He closed his eyes again and enjoyed the peace and stillness. Of a sudden he came wide awake.

He knew the identity of the Broznian spy.

Some subrational counting had gone on during the night, had shaped its crystallization, and now the answer lay waiting for him.

The guide at the hotel.

All the clues were there. He had given Prahl the faked visitor's permit with the deliberate intention of leading the Colocon inspectors to him. It had been a clever trick, typical of the sly humanoids. The guide had been fat—the Kreeks were big-bellied. His loose-sleeved blouse and pantaloons had hid his thin limbs; his thick cartilaged ears had been concealed by his shaggy hair. Even his slight lisp fitted.

The fact that Prahl had not read such simple signs earlier could be charged to his inexperience. He was not proud of himself.

A PATCH of sunlight, coming through the opening into the hut told Prahl that it was already late morning. He rose and crawled outside.

The cat girl was waiting, patiently. She was crouched on her heels, drowsing in the warm sun. At her feet lay a rabbit-sized rodent, freshly killed. She regarded Prahl silently, with a warm light in her green eyes.

He realized that he was hungry then and he used some dried leaves and branches that he gathered from about the hut to build a fire and roast the rodent. They ate it with their hands; the meat was tangy but delicious.

The girl sat close to Prahl as they ate and often the soft yarr he had heard the night before rose in her throat. She seemed quite contented with him. He wondered if there were some way he could communicate with her; beyond using a few obvious signs he could think of nothing. He shrugged. It mattered little. She was docile now, with none of the tempestuous temperament she had displayed the evening and night before. He would get on with what he had to do. She could come with him or not, as she chose. Now he had to think of a way to reach the spaceport.

Years before, the ports on all the Worlds had been incorporated as international territory. Until then, many Worlds had levied taxes and import duties, often exorbitant, with serious consequences to the traders. Often they found themselves with profits wiped out, and sometimes not even capital enough to buy fuel for their return trips. Other Worlds retaliated by raising their own fees. There was constant trouble, and trade was threatened with total disruption.

Finally a covenant had been drawn up, placing all spaceports under an international port authority. Traders refused to do business with Worlds not accepting their jurisdiction. Now violators faced disastrous isolation.

Prahl's problem was to reach the port area without being apprehended by the colony police. He knew the Kreek would probably have taken refuge there before this. Perhaps immediately after doing what he could to get him, Prahl, out of the way. He decided that it was best that he wait until darkness to make his try.

PRAHL AND the girl stationed themselves on the second floor of a two-story stone house at the edge of the deserted area. From there they could look through a window opening and survey several streets in the occupied section. They were not busy streets, but the agent might chance to wander by, if he had not yet gone to the spaceport. Otherwise it was a good hiding place.

The girl seemed quite satisfied to spend the day in the old house with Prahl, to simply be where he was. She sat for hours with her shoulder touching his, and often she slept. Twice when they grew hungry he gave her money and she went out and bought food—it was quite easy to indicate by signs what she was to do with the money. Once he tried to explain to her that he wanted new clothes, but she shook her head, not understanding. Their means of communication were too limited. He would have to risk getting by with what he had. He pinned the rip in his blouse the best he could with pins that he took from his pantaloon cuffs.

When evening came they moved out of the old house. Prahl knew the danger that lay between him and the spaceport. His main hope was that the colony government had not set up a cordon of police around the area. Though they would be quite suprisingly inefficient if they had not.

He and the girl worked their way as near the port as they could through the deserted section. A quarter mile from their goal, however, they had to go out into the city streets. They were still crowded with revellers—the anniversary celebration was to run for two weeks. They met no police.

Until they came to within a dozen yards of their destination.

PRAHL SAW the waiting police at the same instant they spotted him. As he wheeled in retreat, a shrill whistle sounded behind him; a gun coughed dully. He ran a few steps and twisted around a building at the end of the block. Other whistles came from his left.

He should have a few minutes start, he figured as he ran. The carnival crowd would slow

up the police. He felt the girl's hand lock in his belt. She had sensed the situation immediately, and reacted with her fast reflexes. She turned him aside, into a driveway between two buildings, and they pounded across a back yard and through a small garden plot.

They went across several more blocks, avoiding streets, until they came to the edge of the wooded area that bounded the city. From behind them, and on both sides, came the sound of more whistles. The colony police were after them in full force.

Once in the woods they had a chance, Prahl decided. He was glad he had waited until near darkness; with luck he would escape now. Yet where would that leave him? he asked himself after a minute. The Kreek would still get away. He debated turning back and trying to get through the police lines.

They came to a wide river before he had quite made up his mind. He had noticed it before, when he landed on this World, and when they waited in the old house. His first thought was that he was trapped. A minute later he was not so certain; this might be his means of escape.

Quickly he checked the direction of the river flow, and was satisfied. It went toward the spaceport area. He kicked off his shoes and dived into the cool water. When he came up he found the girl swimming beside him. Her eyes were bright with excitement; excitement that pleased her. They stayed close together as they drifted in the gathering darkness.

WHEN THEY reached the spaceport area, Prahl and the girl pulled themselves onto the shore. They were safe here. The colony police would not risk following them, he was certain. The Broznians themselves might have hazarded it, but he doubted that the Colocon rulers would dare. To be placed in trade Coventry at this stage of development would be disastrous.

Prahl availed himself of the first opportunity and stopped in at a clothing store and bought a new outfit. He felt much better in his dry clothing. He had a feeling of almost

heady well-being. Yet he had accomplished nothing beyond saving his life.

Surprisingly, the streets here were almost as crowded as those in the city proper. Carnival visitors were coming and going, or putting in their last hours waiting for ships for home. Prahl glanced at his waterproof wristwatch. Less than three hours to ship leaving time.

He had high hopes of finding the Kreek before he shipped out. The alien would feel quite secure here, and would be making little effort to keep hidden.

He had been right. He spotted the Kreek during the first hour.

PRAHL FOLLOWED the fat-appearing man until he came to an alley mouth before closing in. "Turn to your right," he grated, stepping close and pressing the thumb of the hand in his pocket against the Kreek's side.

The Kreek hesitated only an instant. He gave Prahl a fleeting glance in which there was no fear—only a certainty of his own resources—before obeying. The aborigine girl followed silently.

Once in the semi-darkness of the alley, Prahl halted the agent and examined him quickly. He was unarmed. Also, he settled his last doubt as to the other's identity when he felt the thin arms and legs.

The Kreek had been doing some thinking of his own. "You have no gun," he lisped, when Prahl stepped back. He had noted the flatness of Prahl's pocket when he withdrew his hand.

Prahl had been negligent there, but he did not know what else he could have done. He measured the Kreek with a quick survey.

"The next move is yours," the Kreek said, returning Prahl's speculative inspection. He stood with his body held loosely, ready for any move on Prahl's part.

The situation was awkward, Prahl admitted to himself. He would have to do his best to whip the Kreek in the fight that was certain to come. He thought he could, but what then? Could he kill the Kreek in cold blood? He had never killed a man before.

The decision was taken from his hands. Both he and the Kreek had forgotten the aborigine girl. Prahl was still not certain that she could understand Earthian, but just their actions, and inflection of their voices, must have told her the situation. He felt her brush his shoulder lightly as she sprang past.

THE KREEK shifted his stance to meet her, his expression apprehensive. She grabbed him and he chopped at her neck with the back of his hand as he tried to break away. He was much too slow; the girl spun him around and grabbed him about the throat with both hands.

It all happened too quickly for Prahl to move. He watched the Kreek squirm, his eyes wide with fright. His mouth opened as he tried to shout, and he kicked out with both feet. A moment later twin trickles of blood ran from the sides of his mouth and he sagged in the girl's arms. Slowly he slid down her body.

Prahl looked down at the slumped form in bewilderment. The emotion he had seen in the Kreek's eyes had not been fear, he realized now. It had been the expression of a man experiencing the feel of the life spark leaving his body.

Down the front of the Kreek's neck were a double row of deep punctures, where the girl's unsheathed claws had buried themselves.

Prahl glanced up. For a moment he felt as though near shock. He thought that now, thanks to the girl, his assignment had been completed, but little else came through.

She was smiling at him again, gently. And some other emotion softened her gaze now. Was it regret? Abruptly she moved forward until she pressed against him. She ran her fingers through his hair, twice—and was gone.

PRAHL WANDERED listlessly toward the port landing site. The excursion ship from Earth was just coming in. It would stay for two hours, refueling and taking on passengers, before leaving on its return trip.

For some reason Prahl felt deeply apathetic. He knew that later he would feel the satis-

faction of the successful completion of his job, but now his passive thoughts were with the girl. She had been wise enough to know that she had to get out of the area before the port police found the body of the Kreek, and he suspected that she would forget about him in a few days or weeks. The turbulent affairs of the cat-people were probably forgotten at the next engagement. But he knew it would be a long time before he would be able to think of her without a tightening of his throat.

As Prahl watched, the passengers from the Earth ship filed down the landing platform that had been wheeled up. One man, in a light gray suit, stood for a minute on the top step and tipped back his hat. As he came down and made his way through the spectators, Prahl moved along at his side.

They went into the nearest restaurant and took adjoining seats at the lunch counter. "It's over," Prahl said. "The job is done."

The man turned to him and smiled. "Good work, kid," he said. "You'll be the fair-haired boy at headquarters for awhile now." His manner was quite blase. Whether or not he was playing a part, Prahl could not tell. He did know that he didn't like the man very much.

"My name's Bob Marquart, by the way," the agent said.

They shook hands.

"Do you want to tell me about it?" Marquart asked.

Prahl shrugged. "Let's let it go until we get on the ship," he said. "I have a few things to buy for the trip. I left in too much of a hurry to pick up my luggage."

IN THE SPACE ship, Marquart listened to Prahl's story with a politeness that bordered on condescension. His compliments were quite perfunctory.

"I understand they introduced something new in your course at the training school," Marquart said, after a few minutes. He was obviously making conversation to pass the time. "I suppose your Chum was a big help on this job?"

Prahl nodded.

Marquart raised his eyebrows in cynical amusement.

"You don't actually believe in the things, do you?" Despite his air of sophistication, the man liked to talk. "They feel like hollow blocks of wood, don't they?" he asked. "Well, that's just exactly what they are. Hollow blocks of wood. Nothing more."

He was enjoying the disillusioning of a neophyte now. "That exhibition they put on for you was a fake too. Planted questions, mirrors, and such. The amazing levitator was four different men, all made up to look alike. You never did see them close, if you remember." He was quite satisfied with himself.

Prahl knew a minute of doubt. For some reason he remembered a story he had read as a child. One of King Arthur's knights. Sir Gawain, had been given a magic cap. As long as he wore it no dragon could harm him. Soon he won renown as a great dragon slayer. But one day he met the witch who was supposed to have put the charm on the cap, and learned that it was all just a trick. The cap had no magic... The next dragon he met bit off his head.

The bad minute passed. "Why did they try to fool us?" he asked Marquart.

"Oh, they had some idea that if they could make you believe that the Chum worked, it really would. It would pull some power up out of the subconscious. The pipe dream of one of the big-brains. All mottle, of course."

"Of course." Prahl allowed himself a small smile as he closed his eyes and prepared to sleep.

★

Do It Yourself

by Miriam Allen de Ford

Qmrab had never wanted to be an Immortal, but now he was stuck with immortality. Or . . . was there a way he could get himself killed?

"YOU AGAIN?" cried the Enroller, visibly annoyed.

"Me again," Qmrab answered meekly. "You haven't, perhaps, changed your mind since the last time?"

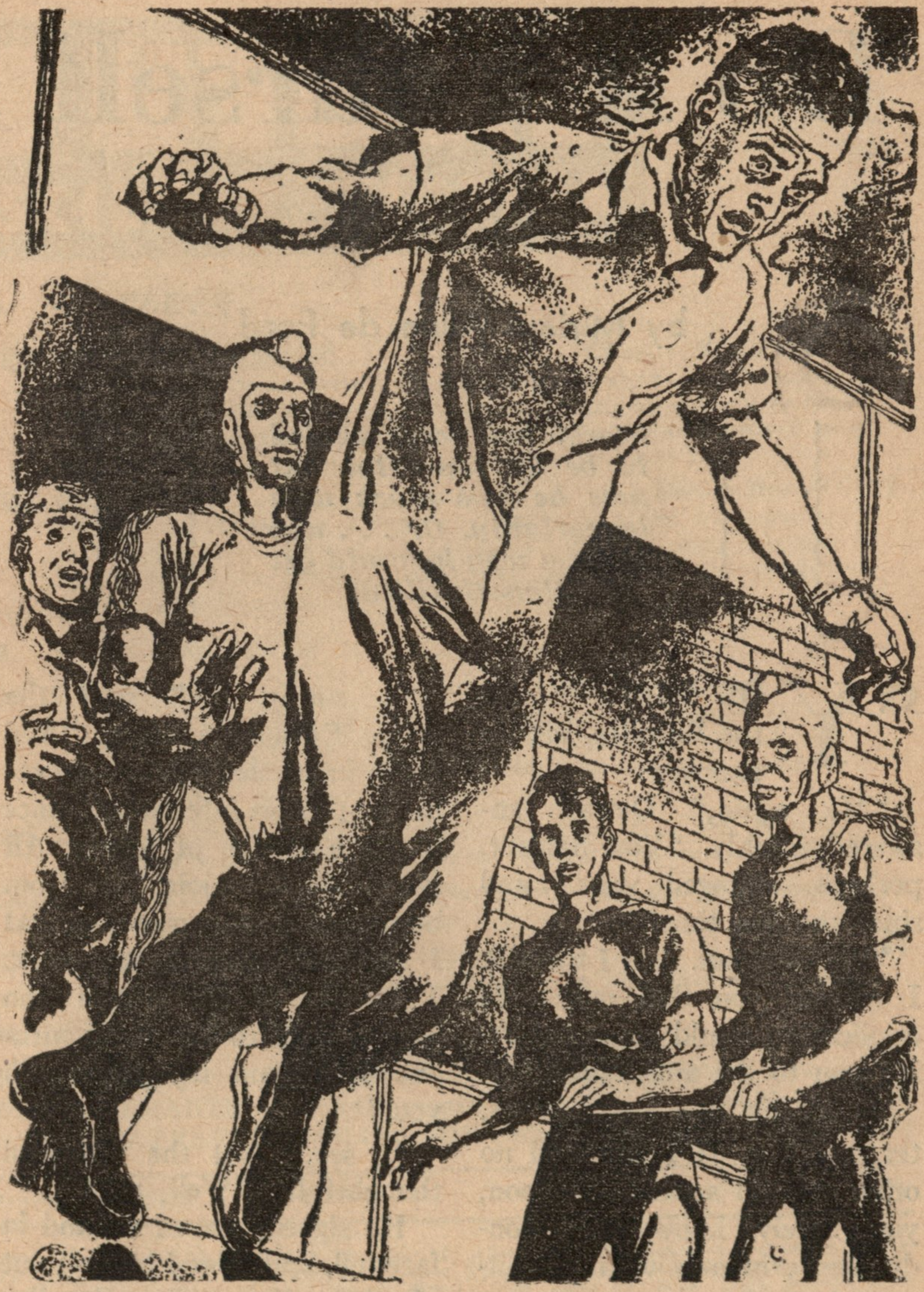
"We have not. And I thought I warned you that one more application would mean reporting you to the authorities."

"I should like nothing better, my boy. If I can find no other way to secure the Boon, you surely know that condemned criminals obtain it automatically."

"I surely do," said the young Enroller suavely. "And I also know that merely reporting you as an infernal nuisance is not a charge of felony. All they'll do is enjoin you from bothering me any more, so that I can get on with my work. There are enough people who have a right to the Boon without taking up my time with you."

"I see," said the old man thoughtfully. "Well, then..."

He sighed, waved a hand in farewell, and bowed himself out of the office. The Enroller



Immortals had fatal accidents — but could such things be arranged?

frowned, shrugged, and then turned to the communicator and ordered, "Send in the next one."

Qmrab walked only as far as the nearest bench in the Park of Recreational Activity surrounding the huge pile of the Administration Buildings. He sat down, with due care for his aged bones and sinews, and meditated in the mild spring sunshine.

His first impulse—to heave a stone through a window of the Jewel Depot, scoop up a few gems, and allow himself to be caught—was of course mere wishful thinking. At the same time he had won the Compulsory Lottery, he had been conditioned against any deliberately unethical action; he was unable to kill, to injure, or to steal. He would have to find a cleverer way than that.

BEING CHOSEN an Immortal, denied the Boon forever which any other human being could claim on presentation of adequate cause, was doubtless all very well for the young. Though Qmrab knew from experience how boring and nerve-grating the certainty of even qualified eternal life could be, a young man, strong and healthy and with appetite for all its alleviations, might very well complacently accept and enjoy what had happened to him. Thousands of them did —though even for the young, Immortality had its drawbacks: for example, what girl would willingly marry a man, knowing that she would grow old and die and be superseded by another young wife? But to inflict such a doom on a man of 76, arresting him forever at that melancholy age of failing powers and multiplying aches and weaknesses, was utterly unfair.

At first he had gone about the matter in due legal form, with affidavits and appeals; but this was his sixth visit to the Enrolling Office and it would have to be his last. The Enroller had plainly meant his threat.

In his day, Qmrab had been a scholar—a teacher, indeed, and something of an authority on prehistory. He had read not only the relevant tapes and films made in his own era, but (in the originals) the infinitely

remote printed books and papers excavated from the various so-called Time Capsules. He knew about the thing called Democracy, and the things called Minorities and Group Pressure. He had been born, as now he might have to live forever, under a monolithic state —but one which, within its limits, permitted full freedom to the individual to write or speak as he pleased, if he could find anyone to listen to him. There was no censorship. There was nothing to prevent Qmrab from searching for other old men and women similarly situated, trying to convince them, trying to form them into a coherent body of spokesmen to advocate a change in the law.

Only, he realized with sad clarity, he hadn't a chance in the world of succeeding.

THERE WERE too few of them, to begin with. The Compulsory Lottery had been held now, in this and the colonial planets, once a year for 127 years. Each time there was one Prime Winner on Terra, one from Luna, Mars, or Venus. That meant 254 immortals. Their names were public; each year Qmrab acquired the current list, on which he himself had first appeared 14 years before. He had checked it carefully; of the 254, only 17 were above the age of 45 when they became immortal. There were eight others between 38 and 45, but these were unlikely prospects, except perhaps for one or two of the women. Even if he could organize and persuade every one of the old ones, what pressure could 17 to 20 old men and women exert on the massive force of Total Government?

And he couldn't count even on all of them. He himself had met only one other old Immortal, Egwadi of Africa. Qmrab smiled ironically at the thought of converting him. Egwadi, with his broad acres and his hundred wives and small nation of descendants, was blissfully happy. Nothing suited him better than to possess all these forever. Most of the others, too, had families and material possessions, and had no intention of losing them. Qmrab had had only a wife, two years younger than himself; she had

died 12 years ago. The shock of his translation into immortality had sent her into premature senility, and Qmrab himself, who loved her, had had to ask for her the Boon that he could not obtain for himself. As for property, scholars never accumulate wealth. All Immortals were, of course, supported by the State in modest comfort, but he owned no mansion, nor was he clothed in priceless non-synthetics; he had a room in a housing project, a one-seater jetcopter, a disposable set of new clothes weekly, and a key to a Class 2 meal-slot, like any other private citizen, and that was all.

Sitting on the park bench, puffing his double pipe of Venus-fern, Qmrab reviewed again and discarded permanently the idea of group protest. Whatever he did—and by Sky, he was going to do *something*—he would have to do unaided. He remembered fleetingly a quaint book from one of the Capsules, describing a rite called "do it yourself," and smiled.

THE SUN was no longer warming him. Qmrab glanced upwards; the rain panels were being lowered over the sidewalks around the park. He got up, as stiffly as he had sat down, and hurried to the garage-roof where his copter was parked. His right hip twinged as it always did in bad weather. It was time for dinner, anyway; and if he was late there would be nothing left but the solid stuff that neither his stomach nor his teeth could cope with any more.

Old men don't need much sleep. Rocking gently on his Foambed, with the murmurous night music turned on, Qmrab planned, discarded, planned again, decided. The details could be improvised, but the general idea was good. It might work, but not in the sophisticated supercities of Terra. Luna City would be best.

He got up, passed his hand over the light-panel, consulted the Luna City phone book. Yes, that was the name. The profile had been in a Light Program telecast about a week ago. He had chuckled then; now he could use the lead.

The morning was bright and sunny. Qmrab was at the ticket

office when it opened. It was too soon for the summer tourist rates, but he wanted to get there before the crowds. The pretty young clerk raised her eyebrows—there was an age-limit on off-Terra travel—but when he showed his gold pin she sold the passage to him immediately, and even wangled a seat for him on the next flight. She smiled and called him "sir," but she looked uneasy; Immortals made normal people feel uncomfortable.

There was nobody to say goodbye to. The few things he wanted to keep went into one bag. He did yield to an impish impulse, and called up the Enroller. "I thought you'd like to know I'm going to the Moon tomorrow," he said blandly. "One way."

"That's very sensible."

Qmrab controlled his laughter at sight of the relief on the young man's face. "Oh, I'll be back some day," he promised mendaciously.

"I certainly hope so," said the Enroller, not meaning it in the least.

Then there was nothing to do but take care of the formalities of giving up his room and copter and meal-slot key, to be exchanged for those he would need in Luna City. He bought an out-dome outfit, for the looks of it. But he had no intention of leaving the city, once he got there, and he wouldn't be there long—he hoped.

DURING the trip he didn't mix with the other passengers, and he paid no attention to the news and amusement screen. He was busy sharpening up his plan. One casual display of his gold pin, and they respectfully let him alone.

He was the last to disembark. It was late in the Moon's two-week night, and he had to wait until Administration could find a vacant room. The city was always crowded at night, when the out-dome workers came in to shop and attend to personal business. But they gave him a meal-slot key immediately, and by the time he had finished dinner in the station lounge they had a place assigned to him. If he needed a copter, they told him, they would have one for him in a couple of days. He thanked

them politely and said he'd let them know. Luna City was small enough to walk in, and he didn't expect to leave it. He wasn't there for sightseeing—he'd done his Moon sightseeing 50 years ago, on his bridal tour—and the man he was going to make use of would be right in the city all the time: he had to be—he was chairman of the Judicial Commission for Luna.

Qmrab ignored him until he himself got settled. A little further investigation on the spot showed that the amusing stories about Judge Emil Hoffmacher were old stuff in Luna City. Here the judge was known to everybody, loved and laughed at; he was a sort of beloved local patsy. Not on the bench; professionally, he was revered and admired. But off-duty, every anecdote of good-natured gullibility was automatically ascribed to the judge. Hoffmacher was made to order for Qmrab. He was, it appeared, an old man too, so he would understand.

Every morning the judge left his bachelor dwelling and sauntered to the Court Building. He always left home early, because it was impossible for him to go more than a few feet without meeting someone who had a favor to ask, or advice to be solicited, or just a greeting to be exchanged. Qmrab shadowed him until he knew Hoffmacher's every feature and his every move. The affable judge obviously found it hard to dispose abruptly of any who approached him. In self-defense he had evolved a procedure which Qmrab noted carefully; the judge would draw from the pocket of his tunic a chronometer which he would consult, tut-tut regretfully, and manage to move on a bit nearer his destination. A little research in the Luna City tridimens tapes even gave Qmrab the chronometer's history: it had been presented, a superb example of skilled horological art, giving forth in its tiny voice—either terran or lunar time—at the lightest touch of a finger, to Judge Hoffmacher in commemoration of his 25th year on the bench. It provided the final details of Qmrab's plan.

FOR OVER a week, Qmrab studied his prey like a hungry hawk. He even made charts

of Hoffmacher's courtward route, noting the time and place of every interruption and averaging them day by day. He observed that, as might have been anticipated, the earlier portion of the judge's daily journey was the least subject to disturbance; as he neared the Court Building the interruptions grew thick and fast.

On a morning when his plan was ripe, Qmrab stationed himself at the proper time in a doorway about two blocks from the judge's home. As soon as he saw his victim approaching, he left his post and started to walk slowly toward him. When they came face to face, he stopped, politely touched his forehead, and said: "Your honor, would you please tell me the time?"

Judge Hoffmacher was used to being accosted by people who were strangers to him but who knew him. Courteously he drew out the precious chronometer and pressed the spring which announced the hour.

Qmrab's face became the picture of shocked astonishment. He stared incredulously at the watch. "No!" he gasped. "It can't be—but it is!"

The judge gazed at him in bewilderment. "What?" he asked.

Qmrab pointed a trembling finger. "That!"

"That's my presentation watch: haven't you ever heard of it? I thought everybody who knew me by sight was familiar with it."

"Oh, no! Oh, your honor, if you value your good name..."

"What under the sun do you mean, man?"

"Your honor, I implore you! I recognized it at once. I've just arrived here from Terra, so I hadn't known before."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Hoffmacher said kindly. "I'm sorry—I'll be late for court if I'm not careful. If there's something you want to discuss with me..."

"I must—if you'll be so gracious. It's vitally important. The very first day I was here, you were pointed out to me as the best loved man in Luna City. And now to find...

"But I mustn't keep you. When may I call and talk to you?"

"Whenever you please—this evening if you like."

"I'll be there. And please, your honor, put that thing out of sight, and don't touch it again until I've had a chance to convince you."

"My beautiful chronometer? It's the pride of my life. All right, all right; I'll see you tonight. Good day to you, sir."

Shaking his head in perplexed amusement, the judge went his way. Qmrab turned the corner and by another route returned to the room he had been given. The first round had gone to him.

"DO YOU MEAN to say," Qmrab purred, "that everybody concerned must be innocent? I'm quite sure your honor is, but all those who gave you the chronometer. . ."

"My friends," said the judge rather stiffly, "are quite above suspicion. I am sure that if this watch is what you tell me it is —if it is a rare antique stolen from a museum on Terra. . ."

"The Central Museum of Applied Art. I have seen it there dozens of times. And when I left, there was still agitation about the failure of the police to find it."

"Then my friends themselves must have been deceived. Of course I shall not wear it again." Emil Hoffmacher sighed. "I know all the people who combined to give it to me; I shall see them all and find out the—what do they call it? the provenance of the watch. And if it has been stolen, then of course I shall see that it is returned to the museum, and do my best to apprehend the thief."

Qmrab's inhibition against crime fortunately did not include lying—not when it was lying in what his conscience considered a good cause. Now came the ticklish part; he was not sure whether his conditioning would allow him to go on to the next step, but he could try. He drew a deep breath.

"Your honor," he said softly, "The reason I know this is the watch stolen from the museum is—that I was the one who stole it." He cleared his dry throat. "The fence to whom I sold it must have resold it to your friends."

There! He had done it. Since of course he had not stolen the watch, or anything else, since

so far as he knew there was no such watch in the Museum of Applied Art or ever had been, no actual crime had been committed.

The judge stared at him, astounded. "B-but," he stammered, "Why have you told me this? Don't you realize it is now my duty to see that you are arrested and tried for the theft?"

"Arrested and punished, your honor. I shall plead guilty. I had long ago repented my act; when I saw a man, admired and respected as you are, the indirect victim of my theft, I couldn't keep silent any longer."

"But, good Sky, man, don't you realize there is only one penalty left, now that felonies have become so rare? Don't you realize you have put me in a position where I, as the only judge on Luna, must sentence you to death?"

"To the Boon—yes, sir."

HOFFMACHER gazed at Qmrab for a long time without speaking.

"Very well," he said at last. "Since that is your desire, I shall have to take you now to our jail."

"That will not be necessary, your honor. If I may stop by at my room for a few personal belongings, I shall report to the police immediately. You may notify them I am coming."

"As you like. You will appear in my court the first thing tomorrow morning."

Qmrab suspected shrewdly that the kindly judge would just as soon have had his prisoner escape, if that had been possible. But Luna City was too small for concealment, no one could leave it unobserved—and in any case, the judge had never in his career had a defendant more eager to be sentenced. Qmrab spent the night in a bare cell with his heart full of the first peace and hope he had known since that lottery 14 years earlier.

THERE WASN'T much business for a judge in Luna City—a few miners on leave in town, picked up as d. and d. at one of the dives down by the spaceport; an occasional minor assault case—theft was practically unknown; the usual

civil suits that occur wherever people and property meet. Still, Qmrab reflected, it was necessary to have some representative of the judicial branch of the Terran Government in a permanent post on Luna, if only for emergencies like his case. Today the calendar was so clear that, after sending two dejected men with bad headaches back to the Copernican mines with a small lecture, Qmrab was next.

He had had little acquaintance with judicial procedure on Terra, but even he realized that procedure in Judge Hoffmacher's court was rather peculiar. Nobody mentioned an indictment; nobody suggested that he should have a lawyer; and there was no hint of the existence of any of the things Qmrab had supposed necessary to a legal trial—a prosecutor, a jury, any court officer at all except a reporter tending a tape-recorder. Even the benches for spectators were empty; people evidently had other things to do on Luna than hang around courtrooms in which they had no personal business. He concentrated on the only point that mattered: he had confessed to a felony, the penalty for which was death, and he intended to plead guilty and earn that penalty.

The judge's very first words struck terror to his heart.

"Qmrab," Judge Hoffmacher said, "didn't you know that the police would search your room as soon as they had you in custody?"

"No, I never thought of that," Qmrab said almost inaudibly. He understood now the strange nature of this hearing. What had been his most important errand before giving himself up had been to leave behind in his room—safely concealed, he had rashly imagined—the gold pin which betrayed his status as an Immortal.

"IN ANY case," the judge went on smoothly, "I would naturally have the list of new and old Immortals sent me every year. I couldn't help wondering why anyone should be so insouciant about incurring the death penalty—and why he should refer to death as the Boon. I looked up the list and found your name at once.

In any event, do you think we are so primitive here on Luna that we would condemn and execute a man without making any investigation about him?"

"I see." Qmrab felt the weight of immortality settle again on his shoulders like a physical burden.

Hoffmacher turned to the reporter. "I'm suspending court for a few minutes, Rene," he said. "Stop the machine and take a breather. I want to talk to this defendant in my chambers, without a record."

He beckoned to Qmrab, who trailed disconsolately after him to the little room which the judge grandly called his chambers. He waved Qmrab to a chair.

"Now, my friend, tell me the truth. First, about the watch."

What was the use? Qmrab said dully: "I never saw the watch except in your possession. It never was in any museum, that I know of, and if it was, I never took it from there. I couldn't put such a story across on Terra, but I hoped here on Luna..."

Hoffmacher smiled. "And with that credulous old nitwit Emil Hoffmacher, eh? Oh, I know the stories they tell about me. And some of them are true. But you can't be a judge as long as I have been, and not acquire a slight veneer of shrewdness—at least part of the time."

Qmrab flushed. "I have tried over and over to be given the Boon," he mumbled. "I never wanted to win in the lottery... It isn't fair!" he suddenly burst out. "It isn't just, your honor! We have no choice—nobody asks us if we want to take a chance on immortality; we have to participate, every year, whether we want to or not. And if we win, we are not allowed to give up the prize we never wanted in the first place. At the very least, they ought to have an age limit. Who wants to live forever at 76?"

"A man, no matter what his age, who feels his responsibility as a human being," the judge answered quietly.

QMRAB KNIT his brows in puzzlement. Hoffmacher added: "I'm going to tell you something that perhaps I shouldn't. I myself am an Immortal."

"You're not on the list."

"No. None of us are—the secret committee of ten that, 127 years ago, put the lottery into operation. I am almost 200 years old."

"You weren't 76 when it happened to you."

"No, I was 70. There's not much difference."

"That doesn't answer my question. Or did you just want to insure having some companions in misery?"

The judge clicked his tongue in annoyance. "Oh, Qmrab, Qmrab! Do you really think we were as thoughtless and unkind as that? We couldn't help it. We *had* to make sure that chance, and chance alone, would select the Immortals, without regard to age or sex or ancestry."

"Why?"

Hoffmacher hesitated. Then he said: "If I trust you with a secret, known only to a dozen high government officials and to us who made up that committee, will you give me your word never to tell it to another human being?"

"Secrets are safe with me. All I'm interested in is a way out."

But the judge veered off on another tack.

"We call it immortality," he said, "But of course technically it isn't. The method—its details are a government top secret—insures that you will never die of what people call natural causes. But you, or I, or any other so-called Immortal can die like anyone else through external violence."

"Naturally, I know that. That's why I've tried every way to make the Government apply that violence to me—since I'm conditioned against killing anyone, including myself."

"There's always accident," Hoffmacher said softly.

"You can't make accidents happen," Qmrab objected.

THE JUDGE did not answer. After a long time he said, with difficulty: "We are guinea pigs."

"Whose?"

"That's the whole point. I wanted to tell you—I tried—I find I can't. I'm conditioned too. Perhaps you can guess when I say that once, 127 years

ago, we had visitors, and that they will be back, in their own good time. They left with us—among other valuable things—the method by which you and I and 262 others have been made, to all intents and purposes, immortal.

"That's all I can tell you. You'd better go now. Here's your gold pin back. And don't try any more foolish stunts like the one you tried on me—they won't work. I'm taking you off our records here; you've not been formally charged, anyway.

"I'd help you if I could, Qmrab. I don't know why a lonely old scholar should be useful to Them, but They made no exceptions.... I guess They made a mistake when they put soft old Emil Hoffmacher on that committee—I'm not tough enough for the job. I always suspected that, and you've brought it home to me."

"I'm sorry," Qmrab said. "I didn't mean to make things hard for you."

"It's not your fault. It's just that I wish...

"Nobody knows Their reasons, but we're in Their power. They insisted on a full cross-section of the population, year after year; volunteers wouldn't do, which is why we devised the random system of the Compulsory Lottery.

"I've said enough—too much. Goodbye, Qmrab."

"Goodbye, your honor. And thank you."

"For nothing—unless good wishes can help."

JUDGE HOFFMACHER watched the old man walk stiffly from the room. He shook his head compassionately, remembering his own many friends, his established position, his six years less of the burden of age. Damn Them, wherever they came from, and the pact They had forced on the Government! When They came again—as they would—to collect Their zoo or circus or museum or laboratory or whatever it was, he wished with all his heart that this decrepit, lonely old man need not be among them.

He's free to leave this building by either door, he reflected. *And if Qmrab should choose the one where we'll have to*

have repairs made before we can use it safely again—the one where that coping is getting ready to fall...

He watched from the window and saw Qmrab emerge and turn the corner.

"Too bad," the judge sighed.

Qmrab, with nothing now to look forward to, but much to puzzle over, made his way slowly down the street. Accident, he meditated. I said you couldn't make accidents happen, and he didn't answer. You can't, of course; it would be a kind of suicide, and that I'm inhibited from. But does my subconscious mind know that? I wonder...

Deep in thought, he didn't notice the group of Luna-born children playing marbles on a doorstep. A marble slipped from a player's hand and rolled down to the sidewalk. Qmrab stepped on it. He tried to catch himself, but his ankle turned and he fell heavily, striking his head on the edge of the curb.

Judge Emil Hoffmacher himself attended the dissolution of the corpse in the Disposery. He felt very cheerful, as if he had beaten an enemy. But of course he could claim no credit (unless, perhaps, for putting an idea in Qmrab's subconscious mind), as he could feel no blame. As he notified the authorities of the unfortunate removal by external violence of one of the Immortals, necessitating an extra Terran winner at the next lottery, he found himself hoping that Qmrab's substitute would be young and healthy—a pretty girl, say, who could look forward to an eternity of youth and beauty and romance.

Until, of course, They came again, to claim their booty.

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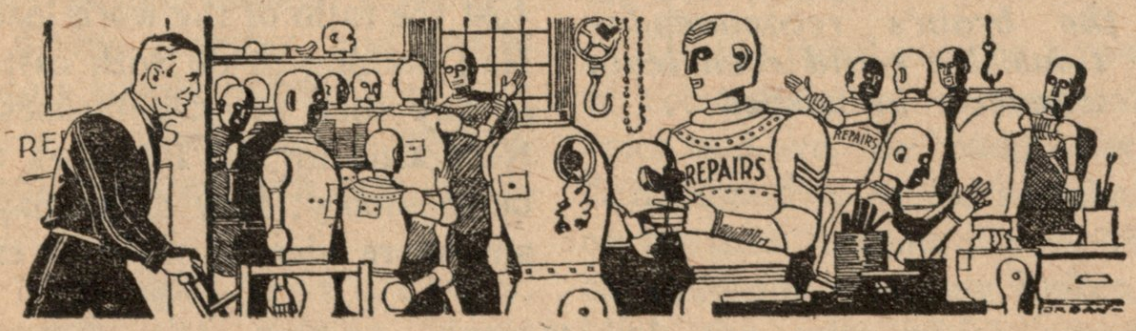

disjecta membra

by BILL WESLEY

For a while, Hank Ryerson rebelled at the thought that the electronic brain had set out his entire life for him. Then the director of Bubble 14 assured him that the brain was merely a tool — not a master. Hank, and everyone else here, was free to disregard the brain's recommendations. He could even leave whenever he wished...

FOR THREE hours, the big land cruiser had been racing through the *wasteland,* passing the villages and isolated farm houses of the *Ordinary Men*; now it eased over to the edge of the freeway and glided down an exit ramp.

"Everybody out for Fourteen," the driver called.

Hank Ryerson began gathering his things. As he joined the line of young men shuffling toward the door, he glanced around to see how many were going on to Bubble 15—to the PPS bubble, as the students called it. The home of philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists. "Where nobody does anything, and everyone knows why not," some wit had said.

He counted five students staying on the bus. That meant fifty physicists and engineers getting off at 14. Instinctively he went on the defensive. Ten to one! It didn't mean a thing. Just the ratio of the work load. Had nothing to do with caste, or any such monkey business. No reason for the PPS men to be so snooty; they didn't have any more idea of what to ex-

pect at Bubble 15 than Hank did at 14.

Nevertheless, when he was on the ground, Hank's eyes followed that land cruiser as it curved back onto the freeway and sped on toward Bubble 15. Most of the other students did the same, he noticed. There was something eerie about the PPS men. Well, not eerie, exactly—but strange. As if they shared some important secret...

"Through the green doors, then to your right," a voice droned from a speaker set in the wall of the bubble. "Leave your baggage where it is—it'll be taken care of."

THE STUDENTS—or ex-students, as they now were—entered a large, bare lobby, and, following directions from another loudspeaker, began shedding their coveralls. Next they passed through a shower, a drying chamber, and finally into a supply room. There they were weighed and measured, then outfitted with new coveralls.

"All right, gentlemen, through the green doors please," another loudspeaker instructed them.

Hank joined the parade again and heard exclamations of disappointment from the first ones through the doors. The next room was large and bare, too, except for the control desks and indicator panels set around the walls, and the familiar plastic-covered stools placed in front of each control desk. It was a duplicate of the Academy's examination hall where Hank and his classmates had been quizzed and graded every two weeks for the past twenty years.

"Find a stool quickly, gentlemen," the unseen guide said. "Close the *Ready* switch when you're comfortable. This will be an eighteen minute session."

Hank shrugged and took his place before a control desk. He adjusted the headphones, then flipped a lever before him, and the quiz was on.

"On the panel you see a row of colored lights," a recorded voice said over the headphones, "corresponding to the switches on the desk in front of you. As the following words are spoken, blink the color which seems

most appropriate to you. Power."

HANK PRESSED a button that caused a yellow light to blink. He had always thought of yellow for power. The sun, he supposed. He had never given it much thought.

"Race."

Hank blinked the brown light. What other color was there? Everybody was brown...

"Space."

He blinked the green light.

On and on the words came, and almost automatically Hank pressed buttons before him. For twenty years, since his fifth birthday, he had been conditioned to this type of examination. Sometimes the quizzes had been true or false tests; sometimes multiple-choice; and sometimes subconscious suggestion quizzes, such as this one. Whatever the technique of the exam, he knew that it was futile to try to catch the significant questions—the traps. The electronic brain would sneak them in no matter how cautious he was, and when it did, he would give an honest answer—his natural instinct would see to that.

AFTERWARD, he realized that such words as *psychologist* and *wasteland* had been thrown at him, and he guessed that he was being tested for proper conditioning to his new environment. At the time, however, before these words could register effectively on his consciousness, he went on to others and couldn't remember later which lights he had blinked. It was the same with the number *fifteen*. He didn't connect it with Bubble 15 until later, and by that time he had no idea what his instinctive reaction had been. If anyone had wanted to know what he thought of the PPS men, they should have asked him, Hank muttered to himself. He thought they were snooty—and strange, that was all. He wasn't suspicious of them, and he certainly wasn't jealous. He wouldn't have traded one of his *pure science* courses for their entire curriculum...

Finally the session was over and Hank laid aside his headphones. When the others had done the same a different voice

addressed them over the speaker system.

"Welcome to Bubble 14, gentlemen, the home of the nuclear sciences. This is your personal director speaking."

There was a pause and Hank found himself wondering if the personnel man was a psychologist. If so, he probably lived in Bubble 15. Maybe they worked out on assignments—like doctors and entertainers...

"You have just taken your last exam," the personnel director said, and his words were greeted by an enthusiastic cry from the ex-students.

HE WAITED until the demonstration had subsided, then said, with a touch of good humor in his voice, "I thought you might welcome that announcement. We assume that if the electronic brain doesn't know you after all this time, it never will."

There was another, milder shout of approval. Then the director's voice became slightly more serious.

"I can assure you, however, that the electronic brain does know you. It knows every facet of your character and of your intellect. It knows your ambitions, your prejudices, your subconscious drives, your potentialities, and, perhaps most important, it k n o w s your limitations. In short, it knows you even better than you know yourself."

For some reason, Hank felt a little uneasy at the thought of an artificial brain having the psychological drop on him. He glanced around to see if any of the others felt the same. They all seemed satisfied—eager, in fact.

Must just be me, he thought.

"It is very important for the brain to know you this well," the director was saying, "because your position in our society will be based on its analysis of your character and capabilities. When you leave here, you will receive an orientation folio explaining all this. You will find that the brain has placed you in a position that will give you maximum opportunity to demonstrate your potential. It has found you a place to live that will meet even your most subtle desires. It has outfitted your apartment with the kind of books and art works

you like best..." Here his voice dropped into a more confidential tone... "It has even selected a girl-friend whom you are sure to like, and who, I assure you, will like you."

HANK SQUIRMED uncomfortably, and saw that he wasn't the only one. His experiences with girls so far had been limited to the sex education classes at the Academy. He didn't know how he would get along with one on his own. And he wasn't at all sure that he liked having the brain choose his job and his books and his girl-friend for him...

"Now I know you are all eager to get out of here and see what life is going to be like," the personnel director went on, "so I won't keep you any longer. I want to remind you of just one other item. The electronic brain which tested you so many times at the Academy, and of which this is a duplicate, is only a tool—a servant. It is not your master. You are under *no obligation* to accept its advice. When you leave here today, you will be free to make your own contacts and to ally yourselves with any employer who offers you a job. We insist only that for the present, at least, you take the apartment assigned you. As in all ages, we are cursed with a housing problem. Later you can make certain applications for moving—even to another bubble if you want to take the chance."

HANK COULD tell from the remarks around him that no one had the faintest desire to move to another bubble. In fact, the director's last words had eased his own feelings considerably. He was willing to believe now that the whole thing was not only organized thoroughly, but quite reasonably.

"I suggest now that you all take taxis to your new apartments and study the orientation folios that will be handed you as you leave the room," the personnel director concluded. "Your apartment address will be printed on the outside of the folio. Inside, you will find, in greater detail, the information I have given you here, and everything should be self-explanatory. If you still have questions, you will find a number

to call that will connect you with my office. Good luck, gentlemen."

There was another shout, and Hank found himself caught up in the mad scramble for the green doors at the end of the room.

OUTSIDE, in the immediate vicinity of the Personnel Building, the street was not much different from those in Bubble 1, the Academy. It was wider; Hank counted eight rails, and four of them were red—that meant two high-speed rails in each direction. The walks were broader, too; and the buildings were more diversified than the sterile monotony of the Academy. Otherwise, the view was more or less a familiar one. Then Hank gazed toward the center of the city and his pulse quickened. There the buildings were taller, and more beautifully curved; and even from a distance he imagined that he could see and hear the activity of ten million people living interesting, exciting lives. Suddenly the twenty years of study and discipline seemed worthwhile; this was the moment he had been waiting for—now his life could begin.

He pressed the footplate marked "Taxi" and slid into the sleek little vehicle that eased to a stop in front of him. He set the controls for a medium-speed rail, punched out the numbers of his new address on the destination panel, and settled back for his first ride through the streets of this, his own city: Bubble 14.

IT WAS NEARLY a month before Hank Ryerson revisited the Personnel Building. In that time, his life had changed in almost every way from the dull captivity of the Academy. He had met his girlfriend and discovered that they really did like each other—even more than he had expected. But he had to laugh when he remembered what it had been like standing outside her door that first night, wondering how the electronic brain could possibly know that he wanted a small, blue-eyed blonde, with soft curves, a subtle perfume, and a black negligee. Then the door had opened and Randy had stood there—a Bohemian out of the past—tight knee-length

pants and a loose turtleneck sweater. Not small, not blue-eyed, not blonde, no perfume—at least not right then—and not even owning a black negligee. But she was well-curved; he had to admit that; and she was a damn smart kid—a nuclear technician on the second level. They had hit it off perfectly. Not that first night, but within a week they were excellent companions. Hank couldn't help remembering the personal director's words, "The brain knows you better than you know yourself."

AT THE LAB, everything had turned out all right too. He had been assigned to the third level. It was almost unbelievable. The rumor had always been that ninety percent of the graduates went to the first level, and a select few went to the second—he didn't know that anyone ever went straight from the Academy to the third level. All those years he had been cursing the brain it must have been giving him straight A's. Now he had a salary of thirty thousand a year, a luxurious apartment, and the distinction of being the only first-year man on the third level.

His responsibilities had not been too clearly defined so far, but he assumed that things would change after a while. He was a supervisor, of a sort, over some engineers on the second level who were developing a new engine. The identity of the vehicle that was to use the engine was so highly classified that no one on the third level knew anything about it. Of course Hank didn't let the engineers under him know this.

The truth was that he had had so little to do that he had found more time to think than ever before in his life. The result of some of that thinking led him once again to the Personnel Building.

This time he actually met the director, himself, and was invited to make himself at home.

THE DIRECTOR was a pleasant-faced man in his fifties—not at all as officious as Hank had imagined him to be. After a few minutes of assuring the director that everything was just fine with his job and with his personal life, Hank

came around to the point of his visit.

"I guess you know that my parents are *Ordinary People,*" he said. "Farmers, I think. They live somewhere out in the *wasteland.*"

The personal director nodded. "I glanced at your card when your name was announced."

Hank hesitated, then tightened his jaw and went on. "I also have a twin brother out there. He's a—a farmer too, I guess."

The director showed no surprise, just sat at his desk with his chin resting on his folded hands. After a while, when Hank had remained silent, the director said, "Do you want me to contact your relatives? Is that what you're trying to say?"

Still Hank hesitated. Finally he blurted, "I don't know what I want, to tell you the truth. I guess I came to ask for advice. I don't know any of them, and I don't know what it's like out there. I don't think I really want to visit them, but maybe I should—that is, if you'll let me..."

The director smiled. "I couldn't prevent you if I wanted to. No one could. You are a free citizen. But I can tell you what it's like out there, and you can make up your own mind."

HANK LEANED forward expectantly, but the director took his time. He filled his pipe with deliberate care, lit it, then studied Hank for a long moment. Finally he leaned back in his chair and spoke in a soft voice.

"The *Ordinary Men,* as we call them today, were separated from the scientists about two hundred years ago. Before that, people lived wherever they chose. They had what were then called cities—today we would call them garbage dumps. They were dirty, noisy, and dark. They had daylight only when the sun was shining, and this encouraged certain adverse activities called crimes. People hurt each other, and robbed each other, and in various ways invaded one another's privacy. Everybody was sick at least half the time, if not with a

physical disease, then with a psychological one.

"Their cities were not level, their streets were designed at random—some of them going up hills; others were curved, or jagged, or intermittent. They had many kinds of vehicles chugging, puffing, screaming—some on the ground, some overhead. They ate primitive foods—either cooked animals or vegetables taken right from the ground."

The director paused abruptly when he saw that his pipe was not lit. Hank waited almost breathlessly for him to continue. Of course he had studied history at the Academy, but he had never heard it encapsulated so effectively. For the first time in his life he was beginning to appreciate the debt that society owed to the builders of the bubbles.

"Well, to cut this all down to size," the director resumed, "this is pretty much the way things are even today out in the *wasteland*. We have helped them all we can, but they continue to defeat themselves. They have no self-discipline. As you know, the children are raised by the parents, though the parents have not generally had any special preparation for raising them. In fact, the *Ordinary Man's* entire history is one of allowing unqualified persons to assume responsibility.

"Their legislative bodies are composed of people with a hodge-podge of backgrounds. Anybody can run for office who wants to, no matter what his previous training or experience. They are still a very primitive people. If we let them in here they would pollute us, and eventually they would kill us off."

HIS VOICE had become increasingly more decisive as he spoke until, at the end, it carried a definite, almost absolute ring to it. It seemed to Hank that when the director paused, it was more for effect than to enable him to collect his thoughts. He gave every indication of knowing exactly what he wanted to say—as if he had said it many times before...

When the director did continue, it was in a milder tone and reminded Hank of the first few years at the Academy when the brain had explained

the simple facts of life to the students.

"There has always been a barrier between scientists and laymen," he said. "First it was the barrier of ideas, then behavior—and finally of language. A few centuries ago this barrier became insurmountable. Scientists could no longer explain their complex discoveries in words simple enough for laymen, or *Ordinary Men,* as we now call them, to understand. The result was inevitable: mutual distrust. First between nations, then within the nations themselves. Wars became increasingly more devastating, famines and plagues came along even worse than in the Dark Ages. Complete disintegration was not far off. Then some farsighted people began the separation movement about two hundred years ago, and you know the rest."

HANK EASED back in his chair and tried to correlate it all. "But is it necessary to discourage all contact with the *Ordinary People?* Even on an individual basis?"

The director shrugged. "We tried half-way measures for a while—it was disasterous. It is far better this way." Then he smiled, almost patronizingly, Hank thought, and said, "I can assure you that your parents and your brother are comfortable, and quite safe, if that's what concerns you."

Hank remained silent for a while, wondering just what his true motivation was. A residual urge dating back to the old days of family life, he supposed. Might as well let well enough alone. After all, his brother could have entered the Academy on a special basis any time up to his fifteenth birthday...

"No, I wasn't worried about them exactly," he said slowly. "I guess I was thinking more of myself—my obligation to them, or something. You've helped me a great deal. I can see now that I wouldn't know what to say if I did see them. I certainly couldn't explain any of my research to a person who didn't have a good grounding in basic neutronics. I'm sorry I used up so much of your time."

"Quite all right," the director said, rising. "I'm glad

you feel better about it. My office is open at any time."

Hank found his way outside and took a taxi back to his apartment. As he watched the beautiful buildings of Bubble 14 grow before him he felt a tremendous sense of relief at not having to go out into the *wasteland*—even on a visit.

A FEW DAYS later, another Ryerson—John Ryerson—was driving his own automobile through the *wasteland* (though he didn't call it that) toward Bubble 14. When he arrived, he was ushered into the same office that his twin brother had visited a day or two before. He went in through a different door, however, and instead of seeing the words "Personnel Director" printed on it, he saw only the one word, "Warden".

"I am John Ryerson from Ohio," he told the man behind the desk. "I have a twin brother in here someplace—at least I guess he's in here. His twenty years was up a few weeks ago. I heard that he was studying physics."

The warden stood up and extended his hand. He motioned for Ryerson to be seated, then settled back into his own chair.

"Yes, Mr. Ryerson, your brother is here," he said, studying a card he had taken from a file when Ryerson's name had been announced. "As a matter of coincidence, I was talking with him only a few days ago."

"Is he—is he all right?" Ryerson asked.

"He's very much all right. He is a graduate research physicist, assigned to an important project. I hope you aren't thinking of applying for his release."

RYERSON squirmed a little and lit a cigaret to hide his self-consciousness. "No, I'm sold on the idea of separation. We need scientists, and I guess Henry was inclined that way. I just wondered if I shouldn't see him. Do you think he would like to have any visitors? Me, or his parents maybe?"

The warden took a few contented puffs on his pipe, then said slowly, "Well, there's no law against it, but I wouldn't advise it. You know as well as I do that there is no way to stop a scientist, once he gets an idea in his head. He can be

a kindly old man who goes to church every Sunday and loves his fellow man with all his heart—yet he will design a gadget that can blow us all to Ganymede. We have to keep them under close control. Now please understand me. I am not accusing scientists of being criminals. I am merely pointing out that their preoccupation with scientific matters has, in the past, made them easy prey for unscrupulous persons who have used their discoveries to further criminal aims. The entire idea of separation is to protect scientists from these criminal influences."

Ryerson held up both hands in protest. "Oh, I'm not arguing against separation—there's no alternative. But do you think just a visit could..."

"A visit would reveal to him that he's a prisoner," the warden said flatly. "Right now, he thinks he's a privileged character."

RYERSON thought it over for a while. It could be dangerous, he supposed, to establish any kind of contact with his brother after all these years. And what good would it do? What could they possibly talk about? Henry wouldn't know anything about agriculture. There would be no way that he could make a living on the outside, even if he did get out. He wouldn't even be able to milk a cow...

"I guess you're right," Ryerson said at last, but with a certain reluctance. "Mother wanted me to make sure that he was okay—that he didn't need anything. Do you give him—I mean, does he have any money at all?"

"Of course he has money," the warden assured him. "He gets thirty dollars a year, though we call it thirty thousand..."

Ryerson started to object.

"Now wait a minute," the warden said. "We have to teach them a certain amount of history and economics—they'd be suspicious if they didn't get a reasonable income. Anyway, what's the difference? The money is all printed in another bubble—it isn't real money."

Ryerson had to admit that it was probably a good idea. After all, scientists never did care much for money. "By the way, what's he working on?

Can you tell me that?"

The warden smiled, almost sadly, and said, "A street sweeper—but a very modern one," he hastened to add. "You'll soon see. They're scheduled for delivery next year sometime. Now please don't worry about your brother," he said, rising, and holding out his hand. "And give my regards to your parents."

RYERSON shook hands somewhat eagerly. Inwardly he was relieved at not having to go any further into the prison. It wasn't as if he had ever really known his brother...

"I know I've taken up a lot of your time," he apologized. "I did wonder, however, how you kept them thinking they were free if you never let them out of here?"

The warden smiled and raised his eyebrows confidentially. "After all, Mr. Ryerson, I'm supposed to be a psychologist."

All Ryerson could think of to reply to that was, "Of course."

He still wasn't sure that he accepted the warden's point of view until he was on his way back to his farm. Then, little by little, a feeling of satisfaction came over him. He was able to convince himself that he had done everything he could for his brother. Anyway, the guy probably liked the place. If not, he could have asked for a release anytime up to his fifteenth birthday...

PSYCHOLOGIST Stanley Johnson re-lit his pipe and settled back into his comfortable chair quite pleased with himself. He found it especially pleasant remembering that his three year tour of duty would be over in just ten more days. Then he would be able to get back to Bubble 15 and rest a while—maybe even take his family on that vacation to Mars they had talked about. Wouldn't hurt to look around the little planet, he mused. The Martians were getting out of hand. The government might be building some bubbles there one of these days, and a man who knew his way around just might happen to get a good position when the time came.

He sighed and placed his pipe in his ashtray. One more

gang of scientists to take care of first, however. What the devil could he give them to work on? He wished he could give them the spaceship drive problem, but it hadn't been released. Well, he'd worry about that later. Had to get the mating business out of the way first.

He opened a drawer of his desk and drew out a pack of cards. He shuffled them a few times, then placed the pack face up on the desk before him. It was a stack of ID cards for the next arrivals from the Academy.

From another drawer he took a list of names of the available women. He glanced at the top number on the list, then wrote it in on the top ID card. The next woman's number went on the next ID card, and so on through the pack. Might as well check the "brain" next, he thought, as he drew a line under the last woman's name used.

He went into the examination hall and opened a cabinet door. There was a fuse box, a master switch, and a tape player—no electronic brain of course, not even a computer. Why should there be? He was a psychologist, wasn't he?

HE CLOSED the switch and gazed around the room. All the indicator lights were dark. He then made a circuit, going from desk to desk and flashing colored lights. When he was satisfied that all the push buttons and lights were in working order, he opened the master switch and returned to his office.

Now for the job classifications. About three second level men this time, he thought—and that's all. No third level, or he'd have to move someone up to the fourth level, and he didn't have anything for them to do up there until the chemists in Bubble 13 sent the fibers for the street sweeper.

He shuffled the cards again, then cut them three times. He marked the selected cards *Second Level* without even noticing the names.

Finally he put everything away and again picked up his pipe. He puffed contentedly for a few moments, then stretched his arms lazily and murmured half-aloud, "Well,

that's that! Another good job done."

Just for a moment he wondered how long the perfect set-up would last. Some bright boy will catch on someday, he assumed. Realize that they've lost their civil rights. Be hell to pay then. Serves them right though. The farmers, too. Burying their heads like a bunch of ostriches...

"Oh well," he sighed. "Be good to get home for a while. No restrictions there." Then he frowned thoughtfully and added, "At least I don't think so."

The Reckoning

A light vote this time, but there was nonetheless a decided trend which suggests that the final results would most probably have not changed the position of the stories. Here's how they came out:

1. The Core (Gottesman)	1.34
2. Superior Weapons (Stapleton, Douglas & Dorothy)	1.81
3. Doorways To Infinity (Forbes)	2.50
4. Fiscal Year (Sevcik)	3.00

Circumstances conspire at times to crowd an item out several issues in a row; but I think that the letters you write are of an interest that goes beyond timeliness — that is why I've run the letters in "Down To Earth" which actually refer to material published several issues back.

And since we're not supermen, your editor is not proof to the cold-virus which, combined with the holiday season rush made it impossible for him to get an editorial done in time for this issue. Sorry — hope you missed it!

caliban

by Thomas N. Scortia

and Jim Harmon

"We want 'a handful of stars' . . . but will you recognize it if you get it? Or will you just grab the first fire extinguisher handy?"

Nothing but blackness above
And nothing that moves but the cars. . . .
God, if You wish for our love,
Fling us a handful of stars!
"Caliban in the Coal Mines"
—Louis Untermeyer

RICHARD FARGOT had been reading, and now he was thinking of the sun on Lake Michigan. It was not an easy thing to do; he had never seen the sun on Lake Michigan. In his thirty-four years, the sun had grown from a casual of-course thing in the sky to a symbol of longing and loss. He had not seen the sun in three years.

Three years without the deep warmth of sunlight on bare skin, the almost-sensuous touch of perspiration of bare limbs only a memory, a sensation to be hoarded and taken out and examined privately in the inner recesses of the mind. He could remember lying unclothed on diamond white sand somewhere, feeling the elemental ecstasy of being animally alive while the sky filled with brilliant light.

He had felt the dull oppression of the office all morning, ever since he had casually

picked up the book from the hospital library and spent an hour browsing through it. It was a pre-mobilization novel—probably a rather bad one by the standards of the time—but the author had a peculiarly sensuous style that pulled you into the center of a welter of sense impressions. For an instant in reading, he had forgotten that he was buried at the bottom of tons of earth and water, that a thousand feet above his head the bright waters of Lake Michigan sparkled in the sun.

THE CLOCK on his desk rolled its cylinders through molasses time, counting viscuous seconds, tallying stifling minutes while Brian Mahoney stood silently across the room, looking out of the broad polarized window into the low-ceilinged cavern that contained the pitiful attempt at an informal garden which the Chicago Shelter Hospital was allowed as a concession to its function.

Finally Fargot said, "I know the Office of Coordination's attitude on this. You've had lots of false alarms."

"And this is not one of them?" Mahoney asked with a half smile.

Given time, Fargot thought, *I will learn to dislike you, Mr. Agent Second Class Mahoney with the vinegar-sweet smile.*

Given time in this hole in the earth and I will learn to hate myself, and wind up blowing out my brains, or getting endlessly drunk, or openly disagreeing with the Office of Scientific Coordination—which is by far the most deadly of the three.

"There's something here," Fargot said carefully. "This time we have something. I'd stake my reputation on it."

"You may well be doing just that." Mahoney made a quick gesture with his hand and said, "No, forget that. It wasn't intended as a threat. I'll listen and help. I'll give you as much help as I honestly can."

"Of course," Fargot said.

"You don't believe that?" Mahoney accused. "Oh, I know, Coordination's help is supposed to be the kiss of death. But we've got a big, thankless, discouraging job. Discipline is hard. It has to be, but, believe me, I'll try to help."

HE PAUSED, weighing his words. "If you chose to destroy yourself, of course, I cannot stop you."

"Is that an open invitation to admit I'm wrong?"

"Interpret it as you wish."

"I made the statement in my original report. I'll stick to it. The man's a teleport."

"I cannot save you if you commit yourself to this. I can only offer you a qualified sympathy if you're sincere."

"Damn it," Fargot said, "don't you think I've checked this backwards and forwards and sideways. I tell you the man's a teleport."

"Very well," Mahoney said tiredly. "Give it to me, then... slow and easy."

Fargot stared at the clock for long seconds. Finally he said, "His name is Theodore Weirner. He's an electrical engineer, assigned at the moment to the turbine installations in the new Gary shelter. There was an accident—a short circuit, I suppose—and he was spattered with hot metal. They brought him there. He moves things—oh, not large things. Just small masses like pencils, water glasses, that sort of thing. That's how we first knew about it.

"He's in a semi-private room. The other bed is empty. The nurse stepped out and when she returned she noticed that the water carafe and glass had been moved from the tray across the room. The bandages around his face and on his chest were wet. She said he'd been asking for a drink before she stepped out."

"IS IT POSSIBLE that he might have moved, gotten from the bed himself?"

"Impossible. Weirner is completely paralyzed."

"Are you sure?"

"His spine is parted by inches. A mass of molten copper the size of a baseball struck him at the base of the neck and burned right through. Ten years ago he would have been dead. He can't last out the week now."

Mahoney took a deep breath. "Let me be quite frank with you, Doctor. I personally believe it is against common sense and natural law for a man to do what you tell me this one has done. I came here under protest. I think top brass is getting pretty desperate when they start c h a s i n g shadows like this."

"Yes," Fargot said drily, "one might consider this sort of investigation impractical."

"I think you go too far, Doctor. The mistakes of the past—if they were mistakes—were honest ones and it would be treasonous to suggest that our present course is not wise."

"The official opinion?" Fargot said. "My God, do you think I like crouching down here like a rat in a hole, waiting for someone to drop a bomb on me while our worthy enemies are out in the sun and walking around on the planets we can never hope to reach?"

"If you don't mind," Mahoney said coldly, "I have my own position to consider, even if you don't value your neck."

"Very well. Let's go see the patient."

THEODORE WEIRNER lay unmoving in the white-draped hospital bed, his head and chest swathed in bandages. There was no pillow under his head and he looked exceedingly uncomfortable. Fargot knew that this wasn't the case—Weirner could feel neither pain nor discomfort. Near the bed an enigmatic black box, eyed with red and green jewel lights, squatted on bare metal legs. Two cables snaked from the box to the bed, feathered into innumerable small colored wires which disappeared under the sheets at waist level while a third smaller cable sprouted from the underside of the machine and terminated somewhere under the patient's shoulder.

"I honestly don't know how I do it," Weirner said. "It's like...I think it's some sort of trance, maybe."

Mahoney made a faint impatient sound.

"No, it's true," the man said faintly. "I didn't want any part of this. It just happens. They leave me in here and something happens and the next thing I know things are...are moved."

"But never out of the room," Mahoney said pointedly.

"What difference does it make?" Fargot asked. "One is as impossible as the other. I've been over this endlessly with your office since Weirner was brought here three months ago."

"Well," Mahoney said, "exactly what happens?"

FARGOT shrugged. "Nothing spectacular except within its own frame of reference. We place two objects in the room...say a book on the chair by the bed and a glass on the table by the door. We leave. When we return, they've changed places. No one is in the room but Ted. Ted is completely paralyzed. No one else can get inside the room. Therefore, Ted moved the objects, presumably by other than physical means. Q. E. D."

"Can I see a demonstration?" Mahoney asked. "Or," he added with a side glance at the man on the bed, "does it have to be arranged for a certain time?"

Fargot felt his temples pulse in sudden anger. "Any time," he said. "We don't have to set anything up."

Mahoney unzipped a portfolio he was carrying. "May I contribute the objects?" He produced a leatherette notepad and a monagrammed ballpoint pen. He dropped the pen on the white sheets at the foot of Weirner's bed. Then he crossed the room and placed the notepad on the small enameled table that bore a water carafe and two utilitarian plastic tumblers.

"Now," he said, "shall we leave?"

OUTSIDE, he fished a cigaret from a battered pack and offered one to Fargot. Fargot shook his head.

"I wish I could have talked your office into sending you three months ago," Fargot said.

"Well, I'm here now."

"Too late, maybe. I don't know how much longer we can keep him alive. The autonomic synthesizer keeps the vital organs going but there's a definite deterioration, and we haven't been able to close the break in the spinal cord."

Mahoney glanced at his wristwatch. "Fifteen minutes. Is that time enough?"

"It has been before," Fargot said.

"What if we happen to catch him in the middle of the process?"

"We haven't yet."

"For heaven's sake, man," Mahoney said, "haven't you tried putting a camera or a television pick-up in the room?"

Fargot looked at him with some irritation. "Of course. Co-

ordination doesn't have a monopoly on intelligence."

"Well."

"No dice—he doesn't perform. We tried everything including audio pick-ups and tape recorders."

"How about hypnosis?"

"We tried that. Narcolepsy too. Whatever happens while we're out of the room, the memory of it is buried too deep for those techniques."

MAHONEY pushed past him and shoved open the door. Fargot followed the man inside. The first thing he saw was the leatherette notepad lying on the white sheets. Mahoney was beside the enameled table, staring at the ballpoint pen in his hand. He placed it carefully in his mouth and rotated it. Then he grunted.

"I'm a pen-biter" he explained. "Lining up the teeth marks."

"It seems to me," Fargot said, "that you'd have as much difficulty explaining a substitution as the present phenomena."

Mahoney colored but said nothing. He walked to the bed, secured the notepad, examined several pages and returned it to his portfolio.

"Are you sure this man is paralyzed?" he asked at last.

"Show him," Weirner said, spitting out the words. "Go on, Doc, show him."

Fargot paused and then said, "Very well, Ted."

He turned the man slowly in his bed, being careful not to disturb the male and female jack assemblies that joined the wires from the various parts of Weirner's body to the cables from the machine. The many-colored wires from the two larger cables ended in tiny glints of metal buried in the man's spine just below the shoulder blades. The third cable lead through the same jack assembly to two small glittering units connected to two platinum disks, each about a centimeter in diameter, buried on edge in the burned flesh.

"THE UNITS at the base of the neck emit radiations through the disks that stimulate cell growth," Fargot said. "You can see that the disks are separated by over an inch. The nerve tissue between them is completely destroyed. We can

x-ray him for you if you wish."

"No," Mahoney said, drawing back. "I'll take your word for it for the moment."

"For the moment?"

"Until I can get some of my own people in here. You don't mind, do you?"

"Would it make a difference if I did?" Fargot asked.

"Not a bit," Mahoney admitted.

Fargot returned to his office alone to find Helen Kanston, his administrative assistant, sitting in the chair beside his desk and smoking a cigaret.

"Hi," he said tiredly, settling himself into the chair behind the desk.

"Bad time with Mahoney?"

"Not too. Have you met him?"

"Yes, he stopped to pay his respects before bearding you in your den... Here, have one of mine."

Fargot accepted a tipped cigaret from the plastic case, crushed it alight, and drew in deeply. "I'm tired," he said. "I am absolutely bushed."

"What's Mahoney's reaction to Weirner?"

"It's hard to say. I get the impression sometimes of empathy with the man, as though there were two sides to him. I think he's trying hard to accept the thing at face value, but the bureaucratic tradition is too strong for him, I think."

"POOR GUY," Helen said slowly.

"Mahoney?"

"No, Weirner. He's just a poor sick man—a man dying by degrees if you face the facts—with an unusual talent. But we still think of him as an interesting case and not as a human."

"That isn't fair," he said.

"No, I suppose not. But I keep wondering why Ted can't do these things while he's conscious—unless, of course, he's not telling the truth about that."

"He insisted that he lost consciousness when we interviewed him under narcolepsy," Fargot said, "and he insisted that he didn't know how he did it—that up until this time he was quite sure he had never teleported anything."

"Could the accident have developed the talent, you know, perhaps rearranged something inside?"

"That's hardly likely. There were no areas of nervous tissue other than that one spinal break involved."

"Immortality urge," she said. "What's that?"

"IMMORTALITY urge," she repeated. "I can't help wondering if the knowledge of his imminent death might have brought this on, you know, a desire to leave something behind...some knowledge, some part of himself."

"I wonder if it would be worthwhile leaving any part of yourself behind," Fargot said, crushing the cigaret into the ash tray on his desk and getting to his feet.

"Those are not healthy sentiments," Helen said.

"Damn it, look at us, sitting at the bottom of a big hole we've dug for ourselves...a social hole as well as a physical one. We're children, pulling the covers over our heads, afraid to look out into the dark. We Americans used to tell ourselves that we were the greatest people on earth, that we were the smartest, richest, most unbeatable. I think that smugness is something they put into our food sometimes. We made an idol of practicality, of planning for the immediate future. Anything that wasn't in our little book of knowledge—anything that required we look and plan ten and twenty years into the future we labeled as 'impractical'... 'visionary.'

"That's the thing that motivates Mahoney—that whole tradition that has put us and half the country in the bottom of holes away from the sun, cowering before batteries of ICBM's across the pole and waiting for some commisar to pull the switch while they walk on the moon and Mars. Mahoney's a fit heir to the tradition. He's not interested in finding out if there's anything here. He's just interested in disproving a phenomenon that doesn't fit into his little neat world."

HE STOPPED and rubbed the back of his neck reflectively. "I'm sorry. I get steamed up with all this crap going on."

"Better here than outside," Helen said quietly.

"I've often wondered how security metamorphosised into thought control.

"Oh," Helen said, "this came in the mornings inter-office bag." She extended a brown envelope.

He ripped it open and read it through quickly. Then he crumbled it and threw it into the waste basket.

"Director Williams?" Helen asked.

"Our good Director Williams, extending his paternal shadow over his department heads."

"What's wrong?"

"A very diplomatic l e t t e r. Translated into human speech, it says, if Ted Weirner turns out to be less than the real thing, I'm cooked, canned, sealed and stored."

"He can't mean that."

"He has his own neck to watch out for. The Office of Scientific Coordination frowns upon failures and false alarms."

FARGOT was sitting at his desk, checking supply vouchers from surgery an hour later when Helen came in and said, "I thought I'd better warn you. I saw Mahoney coming up on the ramp with a gleam in his eye."

"Now what?" Fargot asked, as the door opened behind Helen and Mahoney appeared.

"Busy, Doctor?" he asked.

"No, come on in. You know Miss Kanston I think."

"Yes," Mahoney said, closing the door behind him. "Can I talk freely?"

"Miss Kanston has a Top Secret clearance," Fargot said impatiently.

"Good. I think we may have your teleport nailed."

"Now, just a minute—are you suggesting that I have falsified data, that I have tried to perpetrate a hoax?"

"Doctor," Mahoney said, "I told you I was prepared to give you all the sympathy I could. These things aren't easy, but once you've committed yourself to this course of endorsing Weirner's tricks without qualification well. . ."

He spread his hands eloquently.

"In place of trying to trap the man," Fargot said tiredly, "you should have every available psychologist and bio-chemist and what-not over here, trying to find out how he does t h i n g s. This man has something, if we can only get at it."

"I doubt this very much,"

Mahoney said. "Don't you want to know why I'm so sure?"

"Go ahead."

"I ANTICIPATED some of the problems from your reports," Mahoney said. "Oh, yes, I *did* read them. I brought along a portable detector unit, one of those designed for metal. I set it up outside Weirner's room with the assistance of two of your orderlies and persuaded Weirner to demonstrate his talent again. At the end of five minutes, I turned on the detector."

Fargot hunched forward, waiting.

"I caught a blip of metal moving toward the bed."

"The walls of the room are foam concrete blown over metal screening," Fargot said.

"Of course. I used them as my radiating antenna. Bored a hole in the wall and connected them."

"The whole thing is still inconclusive."

"Perhaps, but with your permission," Mahoney smiled at the word, "I have another suggestion."

"Suggest away," Fargot said, beginning to get angry.

"As you probably know, there have been a number of interrogation drugs developed. They're deep hypnotics and not generally available."

"Not generally known, for obvious reasons, either," Fargot said. "I won't allow it. Weirner is on the point of death. The damage to his autonomic system might prove fatal."

"I WOULDN'T suggest this if there were another way," Mahoney said. "And after all, it's just a matter of eliminating a bothersome piece of data once and for all as the psysicists would say."

Helen was on her feet. "You can't let him!"

"You're a damned fool, Mahoney," Fargot said. "I thought there might be some spark of intelligence in you, but in a pinch you fall back into the same old pattern.

"Coordination is always crying about getting to the stars, about developing new technology to get us out of this run. You've had something perhaps greater in scope than space

travel shown you and you're throwing it away."

"I shall ignore that," Mahoney said. Then his face softened and he said, "I'm doing what I think is best under the circumstances. I'd rather have you present for the experiment."

"And if I refuse to be present?"

"It will go ahead. We already have Director Williams' official permission."

"That," Fargot said bitterly, "probably took a great deal of effort to get."

"TED," FARGOT said softly, "do you remember the time when we tried narcolepsy with you?"

Weirner nodded slowly.

"These gentlemen," he gestured at Mahoney and his two assistants, "have a new drug they'd like to try."

"Sure, Doc, go ahead," the man said.

"It may be dangerous."

"Now, that isn't true at all," Mahoney said. "No more so than the 'scop' derivative they gave you before, Ted."

"Look," the man said tiredly, "I know it's only a matter of time for me anyway. I'd like to think maybe I'd done some good."

He nodded his head. "Sure, go ahead."

Fargot watched one of Mahoney's white-tuniced men prepare the syringe, swab Weirner's arm, and deftly insert the thin needle into the vein. *Number twenty-five,* Fargot thought idly, looking at the needle. They were awfully careful of their patient's comfort...as though he could feel anything.

He withdrew with Helen and Mahoney to a corner of the room.

"It will be several minutes before he's deep enough," Mahoney said.

"Couldn't you have done it some other way?" Helen asked.

"No other way," Mahoney said. "Don't you see, I have a duty too. I have to screen these thousand and one new pieces of work. We need some new approach...badly. But we have to be practical...back something that we see will pay off. Those people on the other side of the pond aren't going to hold off forever. We've got to catch up, be able to knock them out before they can get us. We can't

diffuse our efforts over every small project that comes along."

"HAS IT EVER occurred to you that those people across the pond—as you put it—may not even be concerned with us any more? That they may have sealed us off so completely, surpassed us technologically to the point that they have in fact knocked us out?"

"You're going to get in trouble with that tongue of yours some day."

Helen mumbled something and Mahoney asked, "What was that?"

"Just a poem I heard once. Something about: 'God, if you wish for our love, fling us a handful of stars.' "

"Very pretty," Mahoney said.

"I was thinking," she said. "That's the way we are, waiting for someone to fling us a handful of stars, waiting for some new miracle to put us back above ground, get us to the stars."

"We'll get there. Someday, someday after we've found the answer."

"I wonder if you'll recognize your handful of stars," Fargot said, "or if you'll just grab the first fire extinguisher handy."

"Ready now," one of the men by the bed said.

They moved to the bed and Mahoney leaned over the silent figure. The two men withdrew to a corner of the room.

"Weirner," Mahoney asked, "are you asleep?"

WEIRNER'S tongue quivered and his lips drew back over his teeth. Finally in a distant distracted voice he said, "Yes."

"You will fall more deeply asleep and listen only to my voice."

Silence.

"Do you hear me?"

"Yes."

"How do you move the objects in the room?"

"I don't know."

"You're falling into an even deeper sleep."

Perspiration beaded Weirner's upper lip. His breathing deepened.

"How do you move the objects in the room?"

"I...I don't know," the man's voice said.

"It's not going to give you anything," Fargot said.

"This is my department, Doctor," Mahoney replied. "There's another trick yet."

He walked to the stand by the door and secured a water tumbler. He reached into his pocket, found a coin and placed it on the stand. Then he returned to the bed and placed the tumbler on the floor by the bed.

"Can you still hear me?" he asked.

"I can hear you," Weirner said.

"There is a coin on the table by the door and a tumbler on the floor near the foot of the bed. We are going to leave the room. While we are gone, we want you to exchange the tumbler for the coin. Do you understand?"

"I understand," Weirner said faintly.

"THIS WON'T prove a thing," Fargot said.

"Watch," Mahoney cautioned. He turned back to the man in the bed. "Now" he said. "I am going to count to five. At the count of five, we will all have left the room. You will be alone. You will not hear or see anyone. Do you understand?"

"Yes." The voice was quite faint now.

"Then," Mahoney said, "you will make the exchange."

For a moment, nothing happened. Then Weirner stirred slightly. His right hand moved under his body, fumbled with the cable jacks and disconnected them. Slowly he came erect, the wires dangling from the two incised areas. His feet touched the floor and his filmed eyes found the water glass. He picked it up and slowly walked toward the table by the door.

"There, dear Doctor," Mahoney cried. "There's your teleport."

AT THE SOUND, Theodore Weirner seemed to freeze. Fargot heard him inhale sharply and then in the next instant he folded slowly to the floor. Fargot ran to him and started to lift him. Then he saw that his chest was not moving. His hand found no pulse.

"He's dead," he said at last.

"No matter," Mahoney said. "The point is, we've found you out in your hoax, Doctor."

"Hoax? Why should I want to fake something like this?"

"Espionage is not unknown. It's quite clear that you lied. The man was not paralyzed."

"Not paralyzed?" Fargot rolled the limp body to its side. "How stupid can you get? Didn't you think to check the disks? I tell you, the cord is completely destroyed between them."

"So you say," Mahoney said, gesturing toward the two men in the corner. They walked up, one to either side of Fargot.

"You have been much too talkative for your own good," Mahoney said. "Believe me, I only wish it had been true. I've outgrown fairy tales, however."

"Wait," Helen said. "He's telling the truth. The cord was destroyed. Don't you see? Somehow Weirner had the power to bridge that gap, or perhaps activate his internal organs, his muscles, everything directly. So much more than a silly parlor trick and we've lost it."

"There's your handful of stars," Fargot yelled at Mahoney. "What will they think when they examine the body and see that I told the truth? What will they think then of t h e i r practical man with his fire extinguisher?"

"Shut your mouth, traitor." Mahoney stepped forward and slapped him hard.

"There's your handful of stars," Fargot repeated.

"Shut up, traitor...visionary..." Mahoney said, his eyes mirroring anger and fear.

"Egghead!" He shouted the final epithet.

Novelette

the chrysalids

by ROSSER REEVES

What a member of the Gornae race would have seen and heard in the dead man's room was this: The corpse, motionless, flashed a thought to the orderly: "Am I in the clear?"

THE BURIAL of a General of the Army is a moving thing.

There is the slow beating of the muffled drums down Pennsylvania Avenue. There are the silent crowds, the creak of the wheels of the flag-covered caisson, the empty sound of the hooves of the riderless horse behind it. Then, finally, there is the crash of the last rifle volley, at Arlington—and the floating sadness of the bugle, sounding taps for the dead.

But before this happens, there is one other prerequisite.

The general must die.

General Carrington died beautifully.

The heart attack had come at 4:25 on a Tuesday afternoon, in the year 1907 just as he had returned from the Senate, where he had testified on the military preparedness of the United States.

For two days, he was barely alive. There was time for President Theodore Roosevelt to come, twice, to pay his respects. There was time for the newspapers to cover, in full detail, his services to the nation.

There was time for the ambassadors of England, Germany, France, Russia, Japan—and dozens lesser functionaries—to make their courtesy calls.

Then, on Thursday evening, at 11:48, the craggy old face lost its last animation; the eyes rolled up, the withered mouth drooped open, and there was the sudden, shocking transformation that comes between the last heartbeat and death.

The nurse leaned forward to wipe away the spittle of the last agony.

Beside the bed, of course, was the wife; for women are doomed to deal with the ultimate realities of birth, sadness, and death.

Mrs. Carrington was a puffed, wrinkled little woman. She held the dead hand for a moment, stared at the face as if trying to reconstruct the way it once had been, and then shuffled slowly out of the room—leaving the corpse to those who clean up after death.

WHAT HAPPENED then could be seen, and heard, two ways.

What a Terran would have seen and heard was this: The nurse gently pulled the sheet up over the dead man's face. The hospital orderly looked searchingly around the room, said heavily, "Let's clean up", and started to remove the objects from the table at the bedside.

This took perhaps five seconds.

What a member of the Gornae race would have seen and heard was something else again.

The corpse, motionless, flashed a thought to the orderly: "Am I in the clear?"

And then, faster than a human brain could follow the dialogue went:

"Take it easy. We haven't a watch on the door."

"Explore the corridor, *mentally*. Pick up their thoughts."

"Sometimes this race doesn't think."

"Has the old woman gone?"

"Yes."

"*Thank God!*" There was a hundredth of a second hesitation. "If her family hadn't been so politically influential, I might have given Ranaash an edge, and gotten rid of her twenty years ago."

"You were magnificent!"

"Nonsense. I was no good in this role. I achieved absolutely *no* historical significance."

"It was a period of historical quiescence."

"That was up to me Those are the rules."

"Your brother was strutting around in Germany. Why didn't he help you?"

"After the episode with that girl in 1810? You're projecting!"

"May be."

"I'm desperate for a cigaret. *Now?*"

"For just a minute. Eesha, watch the door."

Suddenly the dead General swung a pair of exceedingly muscular legs out of bed.

GREAT ACTING is not so much voice, make-up, or costume as it is control of the musculature. As Enish stood up, the transformation was remarkable: it reflected an almost non-human muscular control. One second he was old, very old: the chest looked thin, shrunken; the spine sagged; the shoulders sloped, and bent forward, from the pull of seventy years of gravity; the stomach was flaccid, protruding.

Then the body flexed. The big transverse muscles tightened. The stomach became hard and flat. The chest filled with a mighty inrush of air. The arms corded. The man was bursting with a super-human vitality.

"For God's sake, a cigaret!" His thought flashed in an almost thunderous relief from tension.

The nurse hissed mentally: "Quick! Someone is coming!"

Like lightning the man vaulted back into the bed; the muscles went through their transformation; the eyes rolled; the mouth drooped open. The nurse whipped the sheet over his face just before the door opened and two human orderlies came into the room, carrying the basket reserved for the dead.

TWO MEN came out from the McGregor Funeral Home to take the body. The light splashed out of the door to shimmer on the polished black carriage and the sheen

on the two sleek horses. One of the men scribbled a receipt; then, they stooped and took the basket inside.

The heavy door swung softly shut. The latch clicked. A third man checked the lock, and knelt swiftly to open the basket's lid.

"O.K., Eniish," he said, in a soft, musical language. "Get up, and take a bow!"

The General's muscles were already in transformation as he propped himself up to get out. He stood up, stretched, and held out his hands to examine the aged, withered skin: the big, blotched freckles, the wrinkles, the signs of physical deterioration.

"A cigaret, Callan! A cigaret, I beg you!" he said.

Callan lit one and passed it over.

With one hand the General ripped off the flimsy hospital coat and stood nude, the great muscular legs spread. He inhaled deeply.

"*Delicious!*" he said, exhaling with his eyes half-closed. "I wonder what will happen when we take this weed back to Gornae?"

He inhaled deeply again.

Callan jerked a finger in the direction of the room behind him. "O.K., Maestro," he said. "Why don't you get it over with? Everything's there: Tinen fluid, colloidal remover, pigmentation ray, bleaches—everything. Let's see your shining regular face, and we'll give you a drink of *tetzl* so you won't grieve so much—at your own funeral."

THE MAN who walked out of the room two hours later was thirty years old. The hair was black. The eyes were blue. The skin was young and firm and fresh.

He reached out to take from Callan a glass of deep yellow, smokey fluid. "To Gornae!" he said, lifting the glass, and after he had drunk: "Callan, I could hardly keep in character during the last three years. It was incredible boredom."

"Why didn't you cut it short?" said Callan.

The General took another drink of *tetzl*, and put it down to flex all of his muscles, as if trying to bring them back into a forgotten shape.

"Ranaash is ahead of me," he said, "and there was absolutely no chance of a spectacular ending—so, I played it out. I remember once, in a situation not half as hopeless, where Ranaash took it all the way to ninety-nine."

He finished the drink. "How is the corpse?" he asked.

Callan walked him back into the little adjoining chapel, and slid back the lid of the long gray casket.

Eniish stared down at the perfect replica of old General Carrington, complete to the last wrinkle, the last freckle, the frailty and delicacy of the old face.

"Absolutely p e r f e c t," he said. "Who did it?"

"Torna," said Callan. "He was white with rage. He'd spent two months setting up a girl, and then you died. He claims you gave him no warning."

Eniish kept staring down at the effigy.

"He's a great artist," he said, and then added with a smile: "The humans should bury this one next to their Napoleon. There *are,* if they only knew it, certain striking similarities."

NONE OF the millions who had known General Carrington—with his stooped posture, protruding brown eyes, and ravaged old face—could have believed that the young man striding down Wall Street, three days later, had in fact been the General.

Anthropologists might, perhaps, have detected the similarity of the skull; but otherwise, there was no trace of resemblance. There was certainly nothing military about his costume, from his hand-sewn shoes to his custom-made shirt, from his elegant Chesterfield to his slender black cane.

What is more, the General was, at that precise moment, being lowered into his grave.

Eniish was feeling good. The ship was due in eighteen months; this gave him a pleasant year and a half of anonymity. He moved lightly up the steps of the House of Morgan. and then stopped—*suddenly.*

He had seen the girl.

For 2,400 years Eniish had known some of the world's

most beautiful women. But this one, by her sheer *pure* beauty, startled him. She was standing on the top step, fussing with the contents of an absurdly small, and very feminine, handbag.

Almost automatically, Eniish put out a delicate tendril of thought, and slipped into her brain. He was very, very careful. An I.Q. of 550, probing a brain with an I.Q of perhaps 115, could reveal itself.

For the second time, he was startled. This girl, by human standards, was above the genius level. What is more, she was nowhere near as demure as she looked. He wanted her suddenly, with all the hot, furious passion he had damned up in Carrington for the past twenty years.

Another delicate tendril went out; he touched something in her brain; and...

She dropped her bag.

HE MOVED quickly to pick up the contents, the tiny gold keys, the comb, the little jeweled compact. He had withdrawn his mind, so he only heard her expressions of dismay, as he knelt at her feet. But as he stood up, he was startled for the third time; for she looked directly into his eyes, and said levelly: "I don't understand that. It was as though something came into my mind, and made me drop that bag."

"An accident, and *my* pleasure," said Eniish, bowing and giving the bag back to her. Inwardly he was cursing; he could not have been so clumsy! "If you will permit me..."

What happened then was his greatest surprise since he had been on Terra.

She *blazed* into his mind with an almost overpowering burst of thought, with an I.Q. equal to, or greater, than his own. He struggled to put up his shield, but it was too late. He felt her tendrils like hot energy, exploring his brain with unbelievable swiftness. He summoned all of his forces to thrust her out; but not before, and *against his will,* she made *him* drop *his* cane.

"Oh," she said sweetly. "I'm afraid this is our day to be clumsy."

That was all a Terran could

have seen. A lady dropped her bag; a gallant stooped to pick it up, and dropped his cane; a polite murmur from the lady, and a tip of the gallant's hat, before he turned to go.

But what actually went on was a furious, almost *glorious,* conversational exchange:

"Well, at long last I am meeting the great Eniish!"

"You tricked me!"

"Of course!"

"Who are you, in the name of God? I know all the Gornae . . . your brain . . ."

"I am the first cross-breed who kept all the dominants."

"When?"

"Sixty-five years ago."

"*Including* immortality!"

"Of course."

"I am in love with you."

"It would be terrible for me if you weren't."

"Why?"

"I feel the same way."

"You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen."

"It's wonderful you think so."

"I want to come into your brain."

"I want you in—for ever, and ever, and ever!"

THERE WAS a flow between them, rich, warm, tender, glorious, and wonderful. Then, a withdrawing, because it was almost too much.

"I warn you, I am an exceedingly passionate man."

"I'll teach you things about passion you never dreamed of. I've been waiting. I was beginning to despair."

"I love you."

"I love *you.*"

"I love you more."

"I love *you* more."

"Tonight?"

"At seven."

"Where?"

A locational burst of thought.

"Think only of me!"

"Just wait, if I *ever* catch you—*ever!*—thinking of any-anybody but *me!*"

To the observer, the young man had finished tipping the black homburg, and had turned to go; and the young lady was beginning to move down the steps.

Almost in a daze, Eniish was moving through the door to the building before he half-turned, to hurl a final thought after the retreating figure.

"Your father?"

"Ranaash."

A Terran saw the young man stop, as if startled, and then burst out in a ringing peal of laughter. The young lady was already lost in the Wall Street crowd. The Terran could not hear the thought that flashed back: "Ranaash! I don't believe it!"

"Does it matter?"

"Darling, nothing, nothing, nothing will ever matter—except you and me!"

And Eniish moved on to his meeting with the world's greatest banker.

THE ALMOST-legendary financial figure stood up slowly as the young man walked into the room. The great eyes flashed, over the great swollen, ruined nose.

"I am always glad to meet the son of an old friend," he said slowly, moving the great bulk out from behind the desk. His fierce eyes were watching his male secretary as he closed the big oak door.

But mentally, from Eniish, who was watching the superb characterization: "You're magnificent, Kraan. Magnificent! You've never improvised a better role."

"From you, Eniish, that *is* a compliment."

"I'm serious. It's absolutely fresh, original. It's better than your Rothschild."

"Better than my Crassus?"

Eniish's mind flashed back: "I don't know—that was such a spectacular ending. What originality—having the Parthians stuff your mouth with liquid gold! How did you arrange that, by the way?"

"A trick."

"Callan tells me you have heard from the ship."

"Yes, but the news is disappointing."

"A delay?"

"They've been rerouted to Alpha Centauri. Trouble with the overdrive. When the Council heard the news from here, they were in a frenzy."

"News? What news?"

"The Terrans have reached $E=MC_2$."

"Impossible!"

"Just last month. A patent clerk, named Einstein, in Switzerland."

"This race can't handle

atomic power. My God! The cultural instability!"

"We know."

"How long do they give them to fusion?"

"Less time than you think. The Council had the Historians run a probability curve—and the guess is fifty years."

"When is the ship due?"

"In less time than that—about forty years."

"Good thing."

TO A TERRAN the young man had just accepted the great banker's proffered chair, and said aloud, as he seated himself: "You are so kind to give me a few minutes of your time."

But mentally, Eniish was musing: "Forty years. H-m. That gives me time to play one more role. Just time."

"Another? *Right away?* How can you do it, Eniish? I couldn't possibly do it without at least fifty years of anonymity."

"I know. But I failed in this last one: I achieved no historical significance, and that leaves Ranaash way ahead of me."

A slight pause.

"Kraan?"

"Yes?"

"I must know what role Ranaash is playing now. Will you tell me?"

"I'm not supposed to. You two are paired against each other."

"Oh, come."

"I might as well. He's not doing too well with it. He calls himself Vladimir Ilyitch Ulianov."

"I've never heard the name."

"Nobody has. As I say, he doesn't seem to be able to make anything of it. He also goes under the name of Lenin."

Eniish was thoughtful.

"Russia?"

"Yes. He tried to bring off a revolution a couple of years ago, in 1905. So far, he doesn't seem to be any better than your Carrington. I wouldn't worry."

"I can't take a chance." This last was a slow, slow communication. "I can't take a chance." Then: "Kraan?"

"Yes."

"I'm in love."

"You met Liissa?"

"Yes."

A roar of mental laughter from Kraan.

Hurt, and pique, from Eniish. "What's so damned funny?"

"She's Ranaash's daughter."

"I know."

More laughter from Kraan. "*You,* after all these years—you! Oh, Eniish, I know you too well. You'll get over it."

From Eniish, very thoughtfully: "Not this time, Kraan. Not this time."

AS THE beautifully-tailored young man left the banker's office, the male secretary studied him carefully through his rimless glasses. It was quite an unusual morning for Mr. Morgan, he thought. First, the delicious young lady—probably, he reflected, one of the old boy's dozens of legendary mistresses. Then *this* elegant young blade. Well, he might be rich, and he might have connections, but it certainly hadn't gotten him far with Mr. Morgan.

The banker hadn't given him more than two minutes of his time.

THE BEST conversations between lovers, they say, are held at a certain time.

The bedroom of the great house overlooking the Hudson River was dark, but: "Eniish."

"Yes."

"How wonderful! How wonderfully, *wonderfully* wonderful!"

"You'll never know."

The greatest communication between the Gornae is the direct, compete, utter meshings of two minds—an act of intimacy so incomprehensibly complete there is no Terran equivalent."

A long, long silence and then, from the ecstasy, a reluctant withdrawing. For everything there is a limit.

"Eniish."

"Yes."

"Must you play another role?"

"It will be a short one, darling. The ship comes in in about forty years."

"I'm furious."

"So am I."

"Why can't we communicate when you're in character?"

"It's the rule. We have to improvise the role, without

any help from the Gornae, until the end."

"I don't like it."

"Nor do I."

"Eniish?"

"Yes."

"Must you beat Ranaash?"

"Yes. My God, Liissa, the roles that man has played: Disraeli... Borgia! Mine are naturally more spectacular. The military always is—but the judges will discount that. What an artist!"

"Eniish?"

"Yes?"

"I don't want you to have any women in your next role."

"I promise."

Then—a meshing. For four full, lovely minutes a merging of minds, an exquisite unity. And: "Eniish?"

"Yes?"

"A *soldier*—without *women?*"

A flash of vanity.

"Why not? Ranaash isn't the only one who's good at improvisation."

Then a small, tenuous, almost timid reaching out of her next thought? "Promise?"

"Promise."

THE WESTVIEW Sanitarium, hidden more by its dull anonymity than by its location, lay on the outskirts of New York. As Eniish paid for the carriage, and walked up to the door, Callan was sitting on the porch, dressed in the white uniform of a male nurse, and talking to a pretty young Terran girl.

He glanced at Eniish, and his mind reached out: "Leave me be, lover boy. I've spent a day and a half on this and I don't want any of *your* military charm."

A mental grin. "The best meal in the galaxy, against a cigaret, that I can take her away from you by lunch time."

"Do it, and the next time they'll bury *you* in that box. Torna won't have to make an effigy."

"Relax. I'm spoken for."

"I heard about it, but I don't believe it."

"Where do I go?"

"Walk in, turn to the right, take the little elevator to the fourth floor. Menaara has the whole crew there, and they'll do the job fast. You're the last who's going to begin a role."

Flashing last question: "Everybody bored?"

Flashing answer: "Why not? It's been 2,400 of these Terran years. How much can you give to art?"

What the Terran girl saw, as the young male nurse took out a cigaret and leaned over to light it, was this:

She saw a rather handsome young man pay off a carriage driver, pick up his bag, walk rapidly up the short walk and vanish through the door behind her.

The male nurse, holding the match, had merely glanced up, and then gone on with his whispering to her.

"Meet me instead," he was saying softly in her ear. "Your fiance will wait. I've got something I promise you'll like a good deal better."

THE ROOM into which Eniish walked, as the door of the elevator slid back, was the first *really safe* room in which he had been since he had removed his make-up at the McGregor Funeral Home. It was shielded, and the soft, beautiful, musical Gornae language —one of the galaxy's great art forms—could be spoken freely.

It had the safety warning. He heard the mental "Beep-Beep-Beep", at the lowest level of mental hearing, as he walked through the door.

The room was blue with cigaret smoke. His father was there, lounging back in the corner, and reading one of the great Galactic classics—the plays of Thool. Riilbik, the dramatic referee who picked the bodies for the roles, was huddled over a game of chess with Vinteesh, who rated the choices for social momentum. Thin-faced old Muuul, the greatest of all the Gornae gland specialists, was talking to Meleesh, the biologist. There was Rebish, the sculptor; Tanna, the great surgeon; Talia, the anesthetist; and Menaara.

The warm, friendly wash of conversation came to an abrupt stop.

"Eniish!" cried his father, hurling down the book. And from all of them a flood of thought surged forward, eager, tumbling, almost incoherent:

"What a girl you've got in that Liissa!" "You're looking well, but thinner!" "Where did you spend your honeymoon?" "And a *two-year* honeymoon—you should be exhausted!" "What's this nonsense about another role?" "You've got less than thirty years before the ship!" "What the devil went wrong with you on Carrington?" "Kraan tells us..."

The words came in thoughts, and in the Gornae language, and then back again, in thought.

There was a surge and counter-surge of conversation: greetings, gossip, joking, a checking on old friends, the inevitable jests—edged with sly salaciousness—for the bridegroom. A discussion of $E=MC_2$. How, in name of God, *how* could *this* race take it from a yet-unknown paper to final fusion—and in forty years? What a good thing the ship was coming! *This* race had such dangerous cultural instability.

And then, like all professionals the galaxy over, an inevitable drift into shop talk, for it was the reason he was there.

WHAT A POMPOUS role Eniish's brother was playing, with that Hohenzollern. What a character the great Taala had built, with Bismarck! Roars of laughter at Meela: What ego! Stuck in the role of a little Indian, that Ghandi. He couldn't make anything of it if he took another two hundred years. The fantastic Goorl, what amazing changes of character: Imagine, leaping from a scrofulous, greasy old writer like Johnston, almost direct to the cold purity of a Lee!

The greatest roles? There followed an hour of heated discussion: Caligula...Barbarossa...Rebish, the sculptor, who wasn't an actor, but had tried once, as Praxiteles...Atilla... Da Vinci...Riili, who specialized in spectacular curtains, and was now hopelessly blocked as a Russian monk, Rasputin...the wonderful way Ranaash had ended his role in the part of Socrates.

At last, inevitably, the subject of Ranaash against Eniish: one the master of subtle-

ty, the other the mast of glory. Even Riilbik, the dramatic referee, who rarely talked, got into this one:

"Remember Ranaash's Buddha?"

"Remember my Alexander?"

"Remember his Mohammed?"

"Remember my Charlemagne?"

"Remember his Luther?"

"Remember my Frederick the Great?"

"He didn't do too well as Pitt..."

"Ah, and Eniish was Napoleon! The roles *really clashed,* that time!"

"They'll discount the military: it's always a more spectacular role. It really does take less art, Eniish. Even you'll admit it..."

"But the finish on Napoleon! Pure art. The whole *world* was focussed on that tiny little island."

"Yes, but will Eniish get credit for *that?*"

The talk swirled to Zeela and the finnicky Riili, their Lincoln and Booth. What a collaboration, what an ending, and what staging it had taken to bring *that one* off!

And then the final conversation between Riilbik and Eniish, and all of the others were silent: "You insist on trying again, Eniish?"

"Of course."

"A failure now, and Ranaash will win. As it stands, you *may* win."

"I'll take my chances."

"Will you make it another military role?"

"What else?"

Riilbik stood up finally, finished the last sip of his *tetzl,* and said:

"Well, come on down into my study, and I'll show you what bodies we've got."

GIVEN TWO healthy, twenty-year-old Terran males —and age twenty was the starting point, for not even the Gornae science could put an adult into the role of a child— it was obvious that the one with the most social momentum carried, for the actor, a big advantage. If at the very beginning there were money, powerful friends, inherited power, it would take extraordi-

nary subsequent manipuation, and a really brilliant *tour de force,* to impress the judges.

Eniish was sprawled back on Riilbik's couch, going carefully through the cards.

"Don't make that mistake, Eniish," said Riilbik slowly, in the muscial Gornae tongue. Take Telliin, now. "He picked a young Englishman named..." Riilbik snapped his fingers meditatively, and finally went over to his file to check.

"Churchill! Powerful family, politically—a demon mother, who was turning London upside down—Telliin couldn't stop her, even with mental control. It's a poor start."

"How is he doing?" asked Eniish.

"Not much," said Riilbik. "But—Telliin is clever. He may bring it off."

Eniish stared at the cards spread over the low coffee table. Here was fifty, or sixty, selected possibilities. Within two weeks he could be made into an exact physical duplicate of any of them; then, there remained only two or three months of exhaustive study of their minds.

He stared suddenly at Riilbik. "I want the worst," he said, finally. "Give me the one with the least potentialities."

Riilbik smiled. How well he knew Eniish!. He walked over to his desk, and came back and dropped a dossier in front of Eniish, and on the dossier, a picture.

"I kept him out for you," he said. "This one has nothing ...absolutely nothing."

Eniish picked up the picture.

THE BOY wore an ancient black overcoat which looked as if it had been passed down by a dealer in second-hand clothes. It reached to his knees. Unkempt hair hung down over the coat collar from underneath a greasy black derby hat. The thin face was covered with a black beard above which his large, staring eyes were the one prominent feature.

Riilbik said: "A student of Eastern religions—Yoga, Occultism, Hypnotism, Astrology. I.Q., 95. Desperately anxious to impress people—filled with wild ideas from water-divining

to religion. A moral cretin. Can originate no new ideas. Paranoid. Latent homosexual. Veneral. Lives in a world of fantasy bordering on the insane. Born, 1899. Childhood, poverty and privation. Talents, nothing above the 10-year-old level."

"Where?" said Eniish.

"27 Meldemannstrasse, 20th District, Vienna."

"Size?" said Eniish. He was already beginning to feel the nerves, the disquietude, the excitement that always came before he walked into a new role.

Riilbik checked the dossier against Eniish's own card. "This will take a little more time," he said. The skull configuration is exact, but Muuul will have to shorten you. And the face has a whole different series of planes."

Eniish stood up and raised his glass. "My last drink of tetzl in 35 years!" he said, draining half of it down. "Tell old Muuul to lay out his needles."

He stared for a moment into the yellow *tetzl,* and raised his glass again. "I want to say 'Down with Ranaash'," he said, "but do you know, Riilbik, why I don't?"

"Why?" asked Riilbik.

"I have too much to thank him for," said Eniish, finishing his drink.

ON OCTOBER 23, 1914, a military train pulled into the station at Lille, bearing reinforcements for the 6th Bavarian Division of the Bavarian Crown Prince Rupprecht's VIth Army. On board was the 1st Company of the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment, known from its original commander as the List Regiment.

Lounging in one of the crowded compartments were half a dozen young soldiers; one of them, named Max Amman, had been making lewd remarks about an exquisite young army nurse who was on the same train.

She came to the compartment door, just as the train came to a stop. Amman didn't know it, but she had come to say farewell to her lover. "Ten more minutes," she said, cheerfully, "and you boys will be getting hot coffee."

But the conversation, on the telepathic level, was directed to the unimpressive soldier hunched in the corner. It went: "I love you, I love you, I love you."

"And I love you, *with all* my heart."

"I love you more, Eniish."

"I love *you* more."

"Your mind has such a warm feeling."

"I'm thinking of you"

"Make it your greatest role."

"I'll try."

"Take care, darling, take care."

Max Amman stared at the soldier in the corner, and nudged his companion, who was named Hess.

"Look at 'im, Rudy," he snickered. "He's a damned pansy, if you ask me. The only one on the train who hasn't given that nurse a tumble."

He blew noisily through his wet lips. "He'll never amount to anything, if you ask me."

Adolph Hitler looked out of the window, and smiled a little secret smile.

the case of the baby dinosaur

by J. S. Klimaris

Wilbur and Stevenson, of the Society for the Investigation of Unusual Phenomena, hit the jackpot when they were called upon to solve a riddle involving William Shakespeare, Cleopatra, and a baby dinosaur in Times Square.

THE NOISY stream of humanity stopped suddenly. It was twelve noon on June 17 when it happened. The crowds on Times Square gaped in shocked surprise.

"What in the name of tarnation is going on here?" shouted Police Commissioner McClury from a radio car two blocks away. Traffic was at a standstill. Autos, taxis and streetcars were motionless, their drivers adding to the rising din by blaring impatiently with their horns.

"Commissioner! Commission-

er!" Sergeant Clancy cried out as he rushed to the Commissioner's car.

"Well, man," the Commissioner said, "What is it?"

"Tis a baby dinosaur, sir!"

"A what?"

"A baby dinosaur, sir! As I live and breathe, sir! May I drop dead, sir, if it isn't so, sir!"

"Sergeant Clancy," he said gravely, "have you been drinking?"

"Yes sir, I mean no, sir."

Sophisticated newsboys who had seen all there was to see stood still with wide-opened eyes staring at what appeared. Times Square was a bedlam.

No less confused and frightened by all that happened was the baby dinosaur on 42nd Street and Seventh Ave. Only a short moment ago, or so it thought, it had dozed by its mother's side, sleeping in the hot glaring sun. Even now the sleepiness had not completely given way to astonishment.

One small weak paw, as large as a truck, was held fast within the mouth of a subway entrance. Its undeveloped tail, that tapered to the width of a fat man's chest, was hopelessly enmeshed in a theater marquee.

The dinosaur was badly frightened. Even the blase theatergoers of New York could sense this. Its wet eyes looked around in desperation but could see nothing that promised hope. It began to cry, and from its cavernous mouth there emerged a series of sobs, grunts and groans. Many women fainted. Brave men paled.

It is to the credit and quick thinking of Police Commissioner McClury that disaster did not strike. The recent war had the population still well disciplined.

"Attention!" the Commissioner bellowed as he arrived at the scene, "Remove, by force if necessary, every person within six blocks of the monster!"

Times Square was quickly deserted but for the New York City Police force.

"The Bombing Squadron is at your service," Capt. Vance of the U. S. Air Force reported.

"Won't be necessary," the Commissioner curtly told him, "I will commandeer the new Hudson River bridge cables and with a fleet of trucks we'll bring the dinosaur to Central Park."

"Is it true that..." the representatives of the press asked.

"No comment," the Commissioner broke in.

Naturally a great deal of excitement followed the appearance of the baby dinosaur on Times Square and his subsequent removal to Central Park. So great was the excitement, however, that a number of other equally unusual occurrences were glossed over or entirely ignored by the press.

SEVERAL miles away, off the shores of Connecticut, Capt. Bernblower of the Ensign Yacht Club peered anxiously through his binoculars toward the sea. The famous Winterton Cup for sailing was at stake. Any moment now the winning yacht would appear through the mist on Long Island Sound.

A roar went up from the assembled yachtsmen. The first boat was on the horizon and rapidly sailing in to the pier. Capt. Bernblower was a very disappointed man for it was not the *Bernblower III, Jr.*, but a boat belonging to some unknown novice.

This was soon evident to all for the boat was not in the best traditions of the Ensign Yacht Club. The sails were made of coarse grey material that had seen better days. The really unusual feature was the fact that oarsmen, twelve on each side, maneuvered the boat to the Yacht Club's pier.

Capt. Bernblower swallowed his disappointment that the Winterton Cup Race rules made no provision for barring the use of oarsmen and went to greet the victor. The newcomer could speak nothing but Greek and the committee had considerable difficulty in explaining to the stranger, who called himself Ulysses, that his boat had won the Winterton Cup.

Nor were these the only unusual events that occurred that afternoon.

"BONES" PALTON, notorious gangleader of Williamsburg, was found murdered in the rear room of a small out-of-the-way Athletic Club. The murder weapon, a six-inch dagger, was the only clue.

"It is obvious," the arms expert testified during the inves-

tigation, "that the murder was committed by a man who has a sense of humor and of the ironic."

"Why do you say that?" the presiding officer asked.

"The murder weapon is an amazingly accurate reproduction of a dagger used by chivalrous knights of the King Arthur period."

"What are the letters on the dagger?" was the other question.

"The letters complete the ironic touch," he testified, "they read S-I-R G-A-L-A-HAD. Sir Galahad."

Police are now working on the case. An arrest is promised within twenty-four hours. "Slugs" Benton, notorious rival of "Bones" is wanted for questioning.

MR. TAYLOR'S FINGERS drummed incessantly on the desk. Before him, in all their timid glory, sat the two best men of the Society for the Investigation of Unusual Phenomena.

"Well?" he demanded.

Stevenson glanced at Wilbur, and Wilbur glanced back at Stevenson. Both looked self-consciously at Mr. Taylor. Finally Stevenson straightened his hunched shoulders and spoke.

"Nothing to report sir," he said.

Before his voice had stopped on its quavering note, Mr. Taylor howled out at both of them.

"What!" he shouted, "nothing to report! I'll have you hanged by your toe nails and your heads used as brooms to sweep the sidewalks if I don't get some action on this case and get it fast!"

He paused, and then dramatically picked up a sheaf of telegrams.

"Look!" he roared, waving the telegrams at them, "hundreds of notices from the meat-packing and cattle-raising industry demanding that we do something about the dinosaur and see to it that no more appear to wreck their industries! Thousands of telegrams from bankers, brokers and bondsmen asking us to do something about the goblins, pixies and bogey-men that are haunting them!"

Both Wilbur and Stevenson stirred uneasily before this onslaught. All he said was slight-

ly exaggerated, but nevertheless they bowed their heads.

"Gentlemen," Mr. Taylor began again his voice quivering with emotion. "If the Society for the Investigation of Unusual Phenomena doesn't do something—we are lost."

He sat down, hands upon his forehead and elbows on the table. There was a moment of silence while Wilbur and Stevenson composed themselves. Wilbur ventured a word.

"We," he began, faltered, then began again, "have no clue."

MR. TAYLOR looked up at them suddenly and with a hammer-like fist banged on the table.

"Cleopatra makes a smash hit at Radio City," he purred, quietly but ominously. "Peter Stuyvesant slaps the Mayor. Indians ambush a police squad. Benjamin Franklin's kite becomes entangled in a television tower. And you have no clues!" he ended, fairly howling. "What do you think these are?"

At last his rage became boundless. He stormed, ranted, scowled, shouted and yammered and in other ways made his displeasure known to Wilbur and Stevenson.

"Get out," he bellowed. "Get out and don't come back tomorrow or any other day unless you find out what's behind all this! Special Investigators for the Society for the Investigation of Unusual Phenomena—bah!"

Wilbur and Stevenson maneuvered their way quietly to the door and got there just in time, as Mr. Taylor's temper had reached the ink-bottle flinging stage.

"Whew!" Stevenson said when they reached the comparative safety of the busy street.

"Dear me, dear me," muttered Wilbur. "This is most embarrassing."

"We're in a jam, son," Stevenson said, "and unless we do something about it we lose a good job."

"That would be most regrettable."

"Yeah. That's what I said."

AT FIVE O'CLOCK that afternoon, dull-eyed and weary subway travellers at 14th Street and 4th Avenue were disconcerted by the sudden appearance of a man with a three-cornered hat and an un-

usual uniform. Many of the suburbanites said there was something distinctively familiar about the man's face and appearance, but few could put their fingers on it.

George Withers, high school junior, was chatting with Mary Ross, a friend, when the stranger came up to them.

He coughed politely and George turned to him.

"Pardon me, sir," the stranger said, "but I believe I am lost. Can you direct me to Harlem Heights? I must have lost contact with my troops."

"You're supposed to be George Washington, ain'tcha?"

"Yes," he said with dignity, "I am General Washington."

"What's the gag, mister?" Mary interrupted.

"Beg pardon ma'am?"

"You heard her," George said, "what's the big idea?"

"I'm afraid, that I..." said Washington.

"Okay, buddy, just skip it. I suppose MGM's putting out some pitcher about Washington's life. Is that it?"

"But really—I..."

"If that's the way you feel about it, forget it. How's about a free pass, huh?"

"You misunderstand, but, really—I..."

"Yeah, I suppose if you had to give a free movie pass to everybody you wouldn't get anywhere. Thanks anyway. Harlem Heights? Well, you take the I.R.T down there. Turn left for the Fourth Avenue uptown local. Just ask the conductor to let you off at your street. He'll help you. So long, kid."

Their instructions apparently did not do any good, for the man who said he was George Washington did nothing but stare dazedly around him. An officer, noting his suspicious actions, came up to him.

"Whatsa matter, bud?" he said.

"I am George Washington, and..." he said.

"Who're you kidding?"

"Sir," he said, "I am in dire need—and..."

"Oh," said the police officer, "a panhandler, disturbing the peace, impersonating a naval officer and showing signs of severe intoxication! We know how to deal with your type. Come along, buddy, come along."

Protesting, Washington was

taken by the arm and led away.

WILBUR and Stevenson had worked together for many years. With their able investigations the Society for the Investigation of Unusual Phenomena had been able to solve many a strange and weird case.

Theirs was a friendship that had stood the test of many difficult problems. They had solved the Case of the Vanishing Cellars.* They would solve this one. And with this air of optimism and assurance they studied the facts before them as they walked.

"Any ideas?" Stevenson asked.

"None in the least, I regret to say," Wilbur said.

"That's bad."

"However," here Stevenson listened with interest, "there must be a solution."

"Yeah," Stevenson replied disappointedly.

"Naturally some principle of time travel is involved here. The appearance of Ulysses, Cleopatra and a dinosaur can be explained in no other manner. I am satisfied with their authenticity."

* See the May 1960 issue of *Double Action Detective Magazine.*

"I also got the same conclusion."

"Fine thinking, Stevenson, very admirable. Now we must proceed and find out what principle of time travel is involved here. Now..."

"Theory Number One?"

"Yes, Theory Number One: All physical objects have a center of gravity and a center of mass. Anything that occupies space has a center. Shouldn't time also have a center of gravity? If there is such a center we may logically assume: one, that all the residue of the past accumulates in the center—Time being a centripetal force you know, everything going into the vortex of the Past. Secondly, we assume that the Earth, in its travels through space arrived at the point which is the center of time and, in passing brushed away a number of things and individuals of the past. They, h'm, sort of got stuck to the earth, as you might express it in the vernacular."

STEVENSON shook his head.

"Don't sound like anything we can work on."

"No?" Wilbur asked hopefully.

"No."

"Well, Theory Number Two: There is a mirror in space which in passing, reflected upon us three-dimensional materializations of the four-dimentional objects which exist in time."

Again Stevenson shook his head.

"No go," he said.

"Well..."

"Look, Wilbur," Stevenson broke in, "That may be all right. But where does it all get us? It's just another theory. The newspapers are full of theories. What we want is something we can work with, something which Mr. Taylor can put his hands on."

Wilbur looked depressed. Stevenson patted him encouragingly on the back.

"Cheer up," he said. "We'll find a way."

THEY REACHED 48th Street and stopped in front of the Court Theater.

"Want to take in a show?" Stevenson asked. "They got a new production of 'Romeo and Juliet' here. I hear Marianne LaVerve is some hit as Juliet."

"Some other time, Stevenson; we have work to do."

"Okay."

They would have passed on but something happened that attracted their attention. The doors of the theater opened and two ushers came out carrying a man between them. His feet dragged along the ground and his head leaned well forward. Obviously the man was in distress.

The two ushers seated him upon the steps of a nearby building. One of them slapped the stranger upon the face a number of times.

The other returned to the theater for a glass of water. The stranger was oddly dressed but this was nothing unusual. Many cranks make a habit of going to the modern theater.

"What happened?" Stevenson asked the usher who was helping the man stand up.

"He fainted during the first act. Had to carry him out. Know him?"

"Why yes," Wilbur said, much to Stevenson's surprise. "He's a friend of mine. I'll take care of him."

"All right, mister," the usher

said, leaving him, "he's all yours."

"Now what?" Stevenson asked.

THE STRANGER stood up. His face was long and triangular and his clothes tight and close fitting around him. He held his head between his hands and moaned.

"Woe! Woe!" he said, "that I should bear this grief!"

"Say!" said Stevenson, "who is this guy?"

The strange-appearing man looked at them.

"My lords," he said, "to whom am I indebted for my rescue for that theater? Theater?" he paused, as if questioning himself. "T h e a t e r? That word is now venom on my lips!"

"Permit us to introduce ourselves," Wilbur said. "I am Mr. Wilbur and this is my colleague, Mr. Stevenson. Mr. Stevenson, Mr. Shakespeare."

"Huh?"

"William Shakespeare, playwright, at your service," the man said, bowing. "My lords, I am honored."

"Undoubtedly, Master Bill," Wilbur said, "you are confused by what has happened?"

"Confused?" Shakespeare asked, standing on tip-toe, one finger extended in the air. "That is not the word for it! I am perplexed, bewildered, flustered, dazzled, mute with astonishment, dulled and angered by the sallies and thrust of outrageous fortune!"

"Sure, sure," Stevenson said.

"I am in my theater rehearsing when suddenly I find myself in that misplaced section of hell, that abomination of all and beloved of none and forced to endure the most horrible torment of seeing my own Romeo and Juliet," and here he almost burst into tears, "so foully murdered!"

Even Stevenson was moved.

They chatted pleasantly for an hour. Or rather, Wilbur and Shakespeare chatted for Stevenson was still unnerved by Shakespeare's recital of his tragedy. Wilbur tried, as best he could, to explain to Bill, as he affectionately called him, the playwright's position in time.

There was of course a bit of difficulty in explaining the meaning of time travel, but Shakespeare might possibly make p r o f i t a b l e contacts.

Shakespeare accepted them gratefully but with some misgivings.

EVER SINCE the case of the Vanishing Cellars the partnership of Wilbur and Stevenson had been one which really produced results. Sometimes the results had not been gratifying to Mr. Taylor, President of the Society for the Investigation of Unusual Phenomena but nevertheless they were results.

Seven hours had passed since the appearance of the baby dinosaur on Times Square and not one clue.

The ultimatum that Mr. Taylor had g i v e n them weighed heavily on their minds. For if they were fired—abhorrent thought!—where else would they find someone to employ their highly specialized abilities?

With t h e s e discomforting thoughts Wilbur and Stevenson trudged the streets of New York.

The evening sun peered from behind a railroad trestle. A smile appeared on Wilbur's face. Stevenson recognized the sign. An idea was born.

"All right," he said, "what notion have you got now?"

"Stevenson," Wilbur said portentiously, "did it ever occur to you that Nature has no sense of humor or a sense of the incongruous?"

"Yeah, I suppose so. But what do you mean?"

"Atlantis sunk under the seas when there was no civilized people to record the event. A meteor destroys hundreds of miles in Siberia when it could have smashed London or New York. The North Pole moves a few feet or so every year. What do all t h e s e mean? They prove that Nature is blind, purposeless, ignorant, insensible, aimless. But..."

"Ah!"

"But if a man did these things how would he do them? He'd sink only half of Atlantis so that its spires and buildings remaining over the water would mock the Atlanteans. He'd drop the meteor a few miles away from New York and let the steam and the splash scare the living daylights out of every New Yorker. Every few years he would move the Magnetic North Pole to the South Pole and all the instruments of sail-

ing ships would be hopelessly useless."

"I still don't get it," Stevenson said, very much perplexed.

"Just this, my dear friend," Wilbur stressed. "The work of Nature can be recognized by its blindness. The work of Man can be recognized by the sense of humor that is behind it."

"Ah ha!"

"Yes. The force that places Cleopatra in an amateur bathing contest and the force that pits the boat of Ulysses against the sailboats of today can only be a force made by, directed and aimed by a man."

"A time-machinist with a sense of humor!"

"Yes. And he must be here in New York."

"Wilbur! You got something there!"

MR. TAYLOR, president of the Society for the Investigation of Unusual Phenomena was in his office nursing a swollen black eye.

Wilbur and Stevenson knocked on the office door.

"Come in," said Mr. Taylor's discouraged voice. He hid himself behind a newspaper, pretending to read, but when he recognized them he let it drop.

"What happened, boss?" Stevenson asked. "Get hit by a truck?"

"No," Mr. Taylor sighed. "A 13th century witch was here. Pretty, too. I told her she was going to be burned in oil. She disagreed." He rubbed his swollen eye mournfully.

"Any results?" he finally questioned, deciding that nothing could be done about the black eye so let Nature take its course.

"We have a theory," Stevenson said.

"Shoot."

"Tell him, Wilbur."

"Briefly, Mr. Taylor, it is this. We believe that all the materializations of today are caused by a humorist time-machinist."

"Yeah," broke in Stevenson. "Only a wise guy would put a dinosaur in the middle of Times Square."

"Precisely."

"Okay, where is he? Who is he?" said Mr. Taylor. "Find him. I want results, not theories. There's a bonus in this if you boys get it right."

"Granted, Mr. Taylor. First we must find out where he is in

time. Secondly we must find out where he is in space."

"All right," broke in Mr. Taylor, "let's start at the beginning—Time."

"That," said Wilbur, "will be most easy. Obviously he is not in the future. There would be no sense in placing accumulations from the past into another period in the past. He is also obviously not in the past. There is no evident reason for sending an assorted collection of animals and people into the future. Then..."

"Then he's here," Mr. Taylor cut him off angrily, "but where?"

"Now we must find him in space," Wilbur continued, ignoring Mr. Taylor's outburst. "That should not cause much difficulty," he added optimistically.

STEVENSON, however, did not share his enthusiasm. It would be no simple thing to find a time-machinist in a city of seven million. Especially when the only description they had of him was the fact that he had a sense of humor.

Mr. Taylor also shared Stevenson's opinion.

"Boys," Mr. Taylor said, "it doesn't sound so good."

Wilbur and Stevenson were downcast.

"However," he added, "if you bring in results by tomorrow night I'll not only grant you a bonus but I'll double your salary."

"Thank you, Mr. Taylor," Wilbur and Stevenson chorused.

"Meanwhile," he said, caressing the black area that was his eye. "I'm going home. Good night, boys."

When Mr. Taylor closed the door behind him Stevenson turned sharply to Wilbur.

"Well?" he said.

"It's like finding a needle in a haystack, Stevenson, but I think we can do it."

"How?" Stevenson said, but the note of sarcasm was lost upon Wilbur.

"Will you call for me tomorrow morning, say at 8 a.m.?"

"Sure, if there's anything to do."

"There will be. We will pay a visit to our quarry, the humorist time machinist. Meanwhile I must go to the stores and purchase a number of things."

"What?"

"A box of pencils. A large ruler. A copy of every newspaper issued tonight in New York and surrounding cities. The largest map made of New York and vicinity."

"What are you going to do with all that?"

"Hunt for Mr. Time-Machinist."

"Oh."

IT WAS eight o'clock when Stevenson called. The doorbell rang and Wilbur hastened to open it.

"Good morning!" he said, his sleepless eyes peering through heavy-rimmed eyeglasses.

"Morning," Stevenson grunted.

"Are you all ready for our little hunting trip?"

"Look here, Wilbur," he said excitedly, "before I take one step out of here I want to know whether you're talking through your hat or whether you've got something up your sleeve."

"To be sure, my friend, to be sure! I'm sorry that I did not explain to you my plan. But I will."

He then led Stevenson to a larger room which Wilbur often used for research and study purposes. The place was a mess. Littered all around the floor were the newspapers of today and yesterday. On the large table in the center of the room was a huge map of New York City with a multitude of pins, tacks and checker-board pieces on it.

"You will observe," Wilbur began in the fashion of a high school lecturer, "that I have placed markers on the map. These markers designate the spots where there has been the materialization of a man, matter or animal from the past."

"I see," said Stevenson.

"You will also observe," he continued, "something significant. And that being that relatively all the appearances have occurred within the limits of New York City."

"Which I suppose means that the time-machinist is in New York."

"Exactly!"

"But where?"

"And look what more I have done. You will note that the circle in black completely encloses the area in which the appearances have occurred."

"So far so good, but go on."

"That circle is approximately 50 miles in diameter."

"So?"

"I therefore assume that the power of the time-machine is limited to a radius of twenty-five miles."

"I still don't get it."

"Then the time-machinist must be in the exact center of the circle."

It was a moment before the words registered upon Stevenson's brains, but when they did he looked up in surprise.

"Maybe he is!" he said.

"Of course!" Wilbur said, "the theory has no flaw as yet. We can try."

"Where is the center?"

"I have drawn a line from the northern-most limit of the circular line to the southern-most, and another line from the eastern limit to the western. Where those two lines cross is our man!"

"Where?" Stevenson spluttered, "is the devil?"

"Somwhere near the intersection of Beverly and Norton Avenues in Queens Village, Long Island," Wilbur told him.

WILBUR and Stevenson took the Jamaica Express but there was considerable difficulty in Brooklyn. When they stopped to change for a local at Myrtle Avenue they found nothing but wood-burning locomotives of the 1860 vintage. Deciding that discretion was the better side of valor they went downstairs.

But there again the two investigators were discomforted. Horse-drawn streetcars were much too slow and the motormen were more bewildered than the passengers.

There were no taxis in sight, but soon an open carriage of Queen Victoria's period—or was it Louis Napoleon's?—came up to them.

"Carriage, sir?" asked the jovial round-faced driver.

"Do you know the way to Queen's Village?" Wilbur asked.

"Know it?" the man laughed. "Why, sir, I know it as well as I do the back of my hand! 'Tis only a year since I courted the fairest bar maid your eye did ever see in that little village! Ah what a girl she was! And her eyes!"

Pleasant liar, thought Wilbur, but he climbed in and Stevenson followed.

"My memory is not what it used to be in my youth," the driver said, "but which way is it?"

"Turn right and straight ahead for three miles."

"Thank you, sir, thank you!"

"Turn right here," Wilbur said.

"Thank you sir! You gentlemen appear to be Americans, are you not?"

"Yes, we are."

"Fine people, these Americans. Your president, Mr. Lincoln is a very fine man. We all hope he will lick the blooming rebels."

" 'Tis many a year since I've been in this part of England," he said while they drove on," "and the houses appear to have changed a bit lately. It is the style of the French they are adopting, is it not? Queer style, I must say, to crowd the buildings in such an uncomfortable way."

Within the hour they arrived in Queens Village. Wilbur and Stevenson alighted from the carriage.

"That will be one pound, sir," the driver said.

Wilbur gave him five dollars. The driver looked at the money doubtfully.

"United-States-Treasury," he read, "Series 1935."

"That's a misprint," Wilbur said. "It should be Series 1835."

"To be sure! To be sure!" the driver laughed, pocketing his money. "So it is! Why, only the other day the doctor said I had better stop taking a nip at the tavern or else it will affect my eyes. And now," he looked about him suspiciously and doubtfully, "I'm beginning to believe him."

They waved good-bye to the driver as he jogged away.

Both Stevenson and Wilbur had been in Queens Village some years ago on a case involving a haunted motion picture theater. The little village had not changed much in those years. A distinct change, however, must be mentioned. The Colossus of Rhodes was now standing in the village square.

POLICE COMMISSIONER McCLURY no longer had the situation well in hand. In fact, one might say that the situation was definitely out of

hand. The baby dinosaur was becoming a problem.

The commissioner's orders that the dinosaur, or "Margie" as it had been named by the newspapers, be led to Central Park and left there until further orders were faithfully carried out.

While "Margie" was confused and dazed by her sudden change from the Mesozoic period to the present one, she was quite docile and manageable.

But the shock and surprise of the change soon wore off. In due time the tiny brain in back of her head began to clumsily take stock of her situation. Somewhere in the vast recesses of her brain there came the dim realization that not all was as it should be. Mama dinosaur was gone and papa dinosaur failed to answer her mewling squeaks and roars for help. Something was wrong.

Dimly, from the stygian darkness of her subconscious mind came the blind gropings for a solution to her difficulties. Hunger gnawed in her cavernous stomach and the cables and ropes dug deeply into her back.

Somewhere, the feeling within told her, was the cause of all this. And, unerringly like the sense that prompts the kitten to return straight home, it told her where it was.

She roared suddenly and arched her back. The cables, chains and heavy ropes began to break like violin strings. In a moment she was free. She lifted her head high and yelped triumphantly and felt within her the stirring joy of arriving at maturity.

Shaking off the last few chains she galloped away down Fifth Ave. From there she turned left towards Queensboro Bridge. There was much New York-bound traffic at the time, but wherever truck met dinosaur, the truck gave way.

When last seen "Margie" was heading for Queen Village.

FOR TWO hours Wilbur and Stevenson had been ringing doorbells with the success of a book salesman. Discouraged and tired, Stevenson wanted to give up.

"You're idea must've been all wrong," Stevenson said wearily, resting on the stoop of a house where they had been denied admittance by a maid of

sixty-five. "It's no use."

"But it must be somewhere around here," Wilbur said. "It simply must."

Gathering up their fallen courage, Wilbur and Stevenson prepared to visit the next house on Norton Avenue. It was the last on the street. If this proved fruitless they must walk all the way to the other end of the village and start there.

At first there was no answer. Wilbur knocked again. This time they heard steps in the hallway. Both braced themselves for the expected failure.

A short plumpish man with a red-tinted beard opened the door.

Wilbur took off his hat.

"We're from the Society for the Investigation of Unusual Phenomena," he began.

"Sorry," said the man, "but I don't want any. I got some from a fellow who was working his way through college."

He would have closed the door in their faces but Stevenson's foot was already well placed in the doorway. When the door failed to close the bearded man stepped back and roared out, "Nestor!"

Neither of them were prepared for what followed. Three powerfully built Nubians, as wide as they were tall, stepped out of a doorway. Each of them had in his hand a gleaming white scimitar.

Stevenson seized the chair nearby and thrust it swiftly at them. It was caught in mid-air by the blade of one and came down a broken piece of wood. Another Nubian rushed at them, scimitar raised high over his head and ready for the kill. When he had crossed half the hallway Stevenson jumped high, his knees touching his chin and then straightened out. All the force of many years of wrestling skill was in the thrust of those heels. When they connected the massive Nubian went out like a light.

But the other two were far too quick for them. The third seized Wilbur and poised his scimitar over his throat. Wilbur promptly fainted. Stevenson did not have time to get off the floor. Strong muscular hands were around his throat and face. He lost consciousness.

"I AM SORRY," the red-bearded man said when

Wilbur and Stevenson came to. They were in a luxuriously outfitted parlor in Renaissance style. Stevenson had a bandage around his head and Wilbur helped himself to the aspirin that was placed conveniently upon a table near him.

"I have been rather irritable lately," the bearded one continued, "and your sudden appearance annoyed me."

"My name is. . ." Wilbur began to say.

"Quite all right," he said, waving his hand deprecatingly, "I took the liberty of going through your pockets. I notice you have clippings of all my—er—activites yesterday. I see it was in the line of your work that you found me. It interests me," he added with the ghost of a smile on his lips, "how did you do it?"

"Find you?"

"Yes."

"L o g i c a l deduction, Mr. er. . ."

"Mr. Brown. So sorry. Please forgive my lack of manners."

"Quite all right, Mr. Brown. Logical deduction. All the manifestations occurred in a fifty-mile area. We a s s u m e d you would be in the center of it."

"H'm," Mr. Brown said, "so simple? Odd that I did not think of that possibility."

"But now that we are here, Mr. Brown," Wilbur said, "can you tell us of your intentions regarding the baby dinosaur, William Shakespeare, Cleopatra and a number of others?"

THE PROFESSOR, for such he was, sighed.

"Time travel," he said sagaciously, "does not pay."

"Beg pardon?"

"I thought, gentlemen," he continued, "that I would beguile the passage of a few hours by indulging in a number of time-tricks at the expense of my fellow contemporaries. But—ah, no."

"But why, Mr. Brown, why?"

"Frankly, gentlemen, I am bored. When I discovered the secret of reaching into the past I thought I had something for the ennui of living. But that too became tiresome. Yesterday I yielded to a humorous impulse and played a few pranks. I realize now, of course, that I must have inadvertently frightened a number of people.

That dinosaur on Times Square—er—er."

He was obviously embarrassed. Wilbur broke the strained silence by asking him, "How long will they stay in the present, that is, the future, before reverting to the past?"

"Only twenty-four hours," he said. "I did not arrange for more."

Wilbur looked to Stevenson to see if he had any questions. When Stevenson shook his head, Wilbur spoke.

"But haven't you interfered with the stream of history?" he asked.

"Dear me, no!" Mr. Brown said with evident concern, "all of them will return within one second of their time. All that they have seen and heard and felt will, of course, not go back with them. It's quite obvious to you, I am sure, that it is only possible to travel forward in time and to return, but never to travel backward from your starting point. It's one of the rules of time-travel."

"Quite true," Stevenson said wisely, "quite true."

"Why don't you go into the future?"

"I haven't the proper facilities here. Perhaps they may be invented in the future. I don't know."

He lapsed into gloom again. It was soon broken by a large smile on his face.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I think you can help me!"

HE STOOD up excitedly. "Will you wait a moment please?" He opened a door and ran hurriedly upstairs. Before Wilbur and Stevenson could think of what to do he returned to them, nervously shaking and holding a sheaf of papers in his hand.

"This," he said, "is a record of all my work. With this material on hand a future scientist may be able to make a time machine that would be able to reach into the present we are now living in."

He stopped and looked seriously at both Wilbur and Stevenson.

"I want you gentlemen," he said slowly, "to do me an important favor."

"Gladly," Wilbur said.

"Take these papers," Mr. Brown said, "and deposit them within a safe deposit vault with instructions that they are to be

opened in the year 2045. By that time, I believe, someone capable of building a b e t t e r time-machine will be living. This precious manuscript must go to him."

"Is that all?" Wilbur asked.

"No, not yet. Have you a pencil handy?"

Stevenson gave him his. He took it and hurriedly wrote on the back of the last sheet: TO MY FUTURE FRIEND: PLEASE STUDY THIS MATERIAL CAREFULLY. WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED WORKING I SUGGEST THAT YOU CALL FOR ME AT—

"What time is it?" he asked Wilbur.

"10:55."

I SUGGEST THAT YOU CALL ME AT 11 O'CLOCK, JUNE 18, 1945.

(SIGNED) PROFESSOR BROWN.

"But that is five m i n u t e s from now," Wilbur said.

"So it is," the professor said, "so it is."

"But I don't quite..." Wilbur began confusedly.

"Will you please take these papers and deposit them in a vault with the instructions that I have given you, that they will not be opened till 2045 and that they are to be given to the leading time-machinist of that period?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you very much. I will remember this and will invite you to visit me sometime."

THE LITTLE house suddenly began to shake. The professor looked around him in wonder. The shaking became more and more severe and seemed to be coming from the street somewhere.

There in the distance, heading for them like a cannon-ball, was the baby dinosaur. It must have eaten on the way for it was distinctly larger and the expression on its face was not one of bewilderment and confusion but rather of determination and force.

So quickly did it thunder towards them that neither Wilbur nor Stevenson had the time to withdraw their heads from the window.

"This is the end," Wilbur muttered.

But it wasn't.

Suddenly, only a scant few feet away from them, the baby

dinosaur disappeared. Where there was more than an acre of armor-plate thick hide was now merely a s k y l i n e view of a peaceful countryside.

Both Wilbur and Stevenson turned with a sigh of relief back to the parlor.

Another surprise greeted them. Mr. Brown was no longer there.

Just then the grandfather's clock in the hallway began to chime eleven o'clock.

"Oh dear, oh dear," said Wilbur, holding the sheaf of papers in his hands, "what will Mr. Taylor say now?"

At two-thirty that afternoon Shakespeare disappeared as he was about to sign a contract with Metro Productions. The ship of Ulysses, and Ulysses himself, was lost without a trace on Long Island Sound. Miss Cleopatra was being sought by several newspapers for a true life account of "My Life With Anthony."

And in this fashion ended the case of the baby dinosaur.

DOWN TO EARTH

Asimov Ascendant

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Here are my preferences on the August (how come—it's only June) issue. (1) "Point of View: The Moon", by Asimov; (2) "New Model Spaceman", by Thomas; (3) "Anack", by Hardwick; (4) "Baby", by Harris; (5) "Safety Valve", by Aldiss.

Asimov's "Point of View: The Moon" was the outstanding piece of work in the issue. When Doctor A. starts to work on a straight science article, he really does a thorough job. Furthermore, he can explain everything clearly to a non-technical person without dropping to a too-simple level.

I would rate your editorial second. I have always been fascinated by the development of imaginative thinking. I wish I had obtained other issues with this series in them.

I didn't enjoy the stories nearly as much as the articles. Thomas did too much philosophizing, and strained too much to make his idea seem plausible. "Anack" didn't have any point to it, but it was short, fast-moving, and enjoyable.

"Baby" was very unmemorable for anything either good or bad. And Aldiss dragged "Safety Valve" out too long, as if he was trying to write a horror story. The plot didn't begin to take shape until four pages from the end. The lack of information on Whitely was an unforgivable fault.

I didn't like the cover. I am very conservative when it comes to covers, and I think that the *National Geographic* has a good policy concerning

covers. In the s-f field, I like a few of the F&SF covers, and the symbols on ASF; otherwise, I'm indifferent.

ROBERT THRUN, Rt. 1, Box 157, Union Grove, Wisc.

The "Yesterday's World of Tomorrow" series started in Issue Number 33 and ran thence to Number 42 without a break. The final article was written for the June issue (Number 43) but was crowded out.

Theoretically, the series could have been continued, but a poll of the readers favored stopping where I did. The response to my inquiry was gratifying in the number of readers who voted, and their votes broke down into the following categories: (a) yes, keep it going (b) it's good, but you've gone far enough; don't run it into the ground, please (c) it's good, but I'd rather see that space used for fiction, or for other departments (d) it's all right, but I prefer straight editorials (e) don't like it; please stop. The *b, c, d,* and *e* category votes overpowered the *a* category votes, so I concluded that it was best to stop.

For yet another example of how readers' opinions differ, note the following letter.

Dear RAWL:

No offense, but I'm glad you stopped the "Yesterday's World of Tomorrow" series. One or two was interesting and they all had interesting stuff in them, but I was getting rather weary of reading about stories I haven't read, and probably wouldn't bother to read even if I had the magazines—which I haven't and wouldn't bother to obtain. When today's science fiction is good, it's good enough for me and I stick to the magazines which are usually good.

Like yours. I like the general *feel* of it, even if now and then a story doesn't click. These new-style covers show *imagination,* something that the other books seem to be short of. I mean, some of the painted covers are awfully good but most of the time it's pretty much the same thing issue after issue, so that it's hard to tell which is which.

This time, all the stories clicked with me, especially the Theodore Thomas novelet. You seem to get his best. The two shorter stories didn't click so loud, and I got into an argument with Willis Freeman

about "Safety Valve". It was mostly good, but I didn't go for the "crime doesn't pay" angle wherein we find that the lead character really had it coming. Willis wrote back, asking if I'd have liked it better if Whitely had been a perfectly okay guy who is just the innocent victim. You have me there, I had to admit, because I don't know if I would have. It was a small point, anyway, when I come to think of it.

That reminds me, keep Freeman coming through with those analyses every now and then. Seems to me that almost everyone who saves their issues would find the listings interesting. I find it most interesting of all when all three of us agree, or my copy shows a 1, 2, 3 on a particular story, or a 3, 2, 1 and things like that.

Did you notice that Mr. Silverberg is your most versatile author? Twice he's placed in all five categories. That shows that at one time or another he can write a story to please anyone, but not everyone at once.

I'm afraid the straight science articles are wasted on me. Asimov writes them more interesting than most people, but

I'd rather see fiction or departments than articles. Guess I'm in the oppressed minority though because all the books seem to be running articles and they sure all wouldn't be doing it if there wasn't a following.

Like I said at first, no offense. Please keep writing editorials, but not all on the same subject—I mean, more variety. Maybe a "Yesterday's World of Tomorrow" type would be good once a year, when you hit on something that would give you a good tee to drive from.

GEORGE CHASE,
Flagstaff Plantation, Maine.

Whitely's fate in "Safety Valve" was a horrible one, and surely the fact that Whitely had been a murderer at one time doesn't make it any less so. Hath not a killer eyes, ears, etc.? (Vide "Merchant of Venice" for the rest.) For many centuries, it was believed that if the punishment for crime were ghastly enough, if people could be horrified enough at the thought of the gruesome things they would suffer upon conviction, then such thoughts were deter them from the ways of evil.

Well, such theories certainly had a long enough testing-period. And the result was far from what the theory proclaimed. First of all, there's no evidence that any appreciable number of people were deterred by the thought of what would happen were they caught and convicted. Either the person about to commit crime was sure he'd never be caught, or the thought of the penalty drove him to see to it that no one knew of his guilt—which often led to killings he might not have committed otherwise. So, instead of diminishing crime, it multiplied it. For if the criminal knew that he'd be hanged, drawn and quartered anyway, then a few more murders wouldn't make it any worse—and killing off possible witnesses might put him in the clear.

Secondly, since executions were public (the theory being that the practice would be instructive; that the onlookers would learn a lesson which would stand them well if and when temptation came their way) the public was soon immured to the horror of brutality. Watching an execution was not a terrible lesson to the public (for the most part) but a spectator sport.

It lowered the general moral standard, while mak-

ing the onlooker feel very morally superior to the poor wretch who was being tortured up there on the gallows. Which was and is a very bad thing.

Crime shouldn't be encouraged by way of permitting the "criminal" to enjoy the profits of his venalities in peace and comfort—granted. But any form of punishment which dehumanizes the culprit is itself a crime; any form of penalty which constitutes *revenge* rather than a means of making the culprit undergo acts of restitution while he is being reconditioned to "good citizenship" is a crime.

So long as us Honest and Upright Citizens who manage to keep out of jail feel morally superior to the miserable wretches in jail, so long we evade our own share of guilt in the fact of crime. Because the difference between the man who ignores the speed laws without getting into accidents and the one who causes a real bloody smashup by his recklessness is only a difference in degree. Both are guilty of the same crime; but as things stand the second may go to jail (if he survives) while the first can stand outside and feel morally superior.

Rather than feel, "Good—

he got what was coming to him!" when we read about someone hauled into court for maniac driving, a lot of us would be better off if we stopped and thought, "That was just what I did last so-and-so." Sure, we can be grateful that nothing happened to us; we ought to be grateful every day that we don't get what's coming to us on the basis of the way we usually judge other people. But there's the whole point. When we "got away with it" we were contributing to the general milieu in which taking chances on this and that and the other is considered normal. Which is exactly the psychology of the confirmed criminal—the only crime is when you get caught.

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Calling Doctor A

Many thanks to

you and our good friend Dr. Isaac Asimov for the article "Point Of View: The Moon" in your August '59 issue. It was a good job, well done, and interesting from start to finish!

One question, though, didn't get answered (or even asked); that is, "How many times a year would Earth seem, to that Moon-face observer, to turn around on its own axis?" Of course, we must assume in the first place that there will be enough breaks in the clouds and haze so as to let the watcher recognize, and count the passages of, some specific "marker points" like, for example, the peninsula of Florida, the Major Antilles, or the Mediterranean

[*Turn Page*]

Sea, or perhaps Australia.

Subject to possible correction by Dr. Asimov (or other interested party), the answer I make out is "about 352 times". To start with, if Earth kept one face always looking at the Moon's one face, but all other movements stayed the same, an Earth-based watcher would still see the stars go by every period of time equal to 27.32166 of our present common days, the same as his pal on the Moon would now. That makes about 13.37 times per year. Therefore, these 13.37 "times" should be deducted from our normal, Earthly count of 366.25 "star-times" a year. If so, this leaves about 352.88 as Earth's "total-turns" against the stars. But one of those "turns" is the joint trip that Earth and Moon take around the Sun, together; so it would not be noticeable as an "Earth-turn" to the watcher on the Moon. Therefore, Earth's "proper turns" on her own axis are reduced to 351.88, and so seen from the Moon.

In other words, out of the 1037.5 miles per hour a spot

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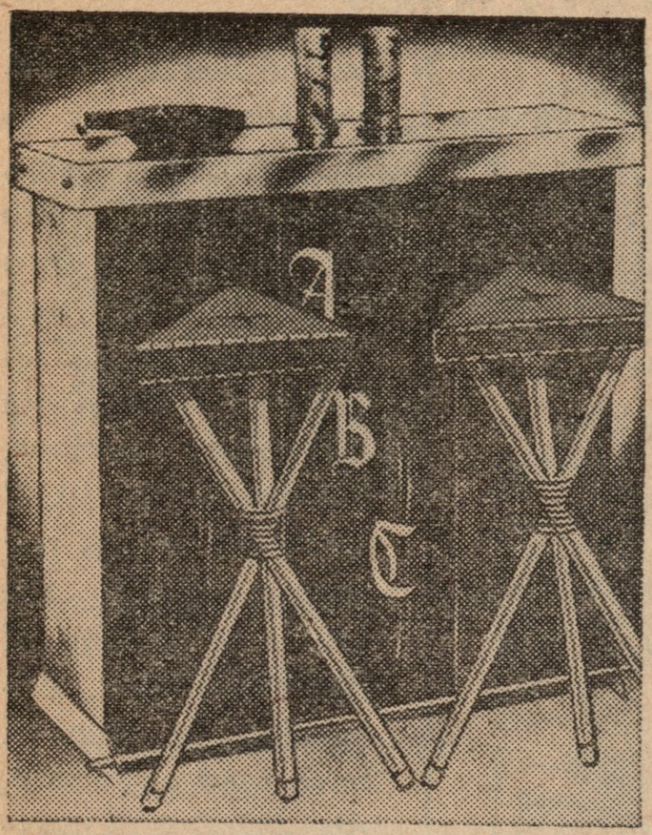

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on the Earth's equator seems to us to move, star-wise, only 1000 are caused by her own axial rotation and the other 37.5 average out from her other motions, principally the 13.37 excentric swings per year around the center of gravity of the two bodies. According to what I have read elsewhere, that "center of gravity" slides around some 1000 miles beneath the Earth's surface—now more, now less—according to how the Moon swings closer or farther off. As a result, Earth's own center also revolves around that moving point 13.37 times a year in an elipse whose mean semi-axis of about 2900 miles is 10/812ths of the mean semi-

[*Turn to Page* 126]

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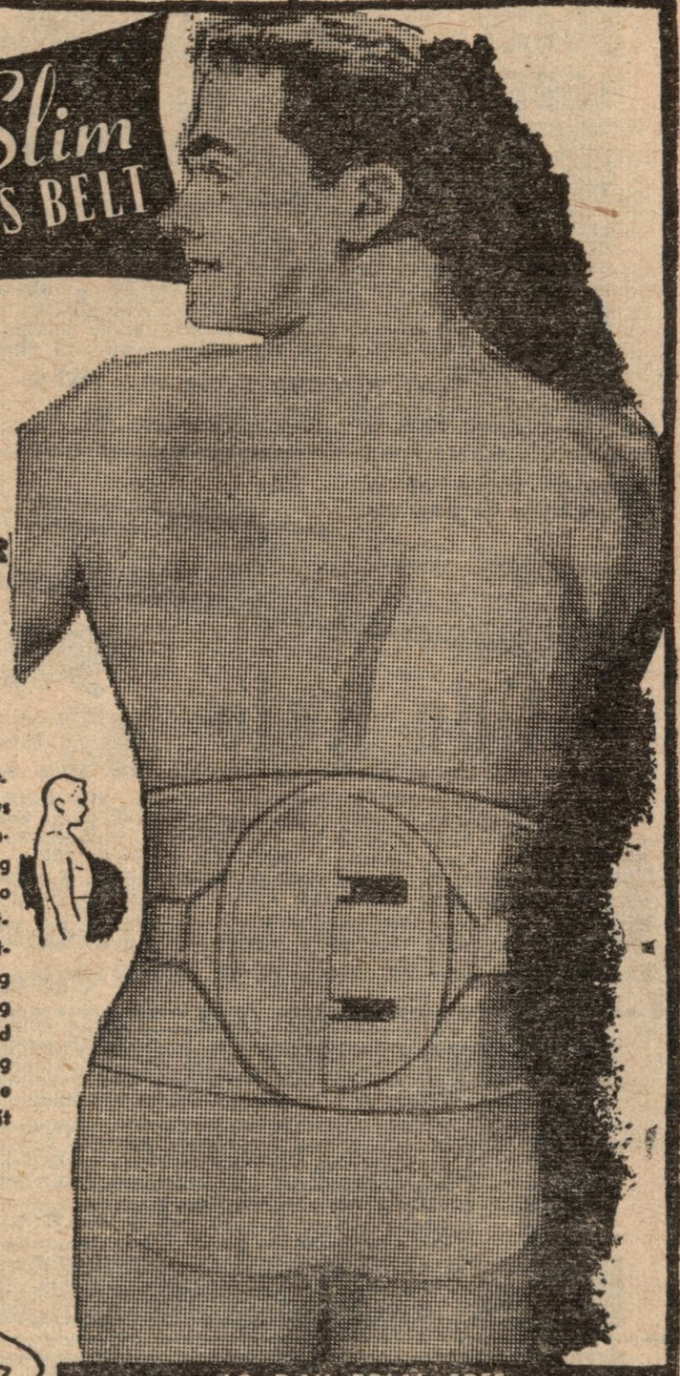

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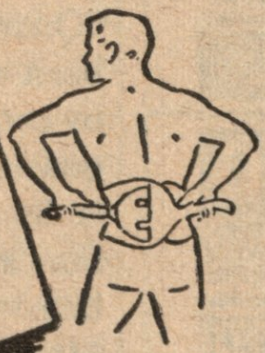

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axis of the Moon's orbital elipse, so that their "see-saw" can stay in balance.

Another point that might be mentioned is the size of that "16 degree elipse" Dr. Asimov enjoyed describing and we enjoyed learning about. It would seem that the figure should be "15 degrees". The other degree, or rather, the two half-degree "peeks around the cheeks" of the Man-in-the-Moon are caused by the 3950-mile "side-steps" of that spot on the Earth's equator as the positions change from "full" to "Quarter". Having been on the "center to center line", each quarter-turn later it is in a 90° re-location away from said line. But, as the Moon-face watcher would still have the

Earth in line, he would not spot any sideways move. At most, he would get the effect of a faster or slower rotation of Earth as he "caught up with" or "slid back on" any selected spot he had picked.

The two 7.5° shifts, of course, are the maximum displacements observed as the Moon "whips ahead" or "drags behind" in her speed of revolution, each time around, according to the relative positions of Earth and Sun, and to whether they are pulling her ahead or holding her back in the swing along her 1,500,000-mile circuit. Incidentally, during those variations in speed, the "line of centers" doesn't stay straight but bends, either

[*Turn Page*]

forward or backward, at the center of gravity until, after a bit, Earth's own center gets around to matching speed. Poor girl, Mother TERRA is so full of bulk and inertia that she can't keep exact step with her light-footed sister, LUNA, who has only 1/4 her diameter, 1/50th her volume, and 10/812ths her mass!

And Asimov Answers

Dear Mr. Stacey:

Thank you for your interest in my article, and for your fascinating letter about it, which contained much I did not know.

I must admit that I had not considered the number of times a year the Earth would seem to rotate to an observer on the Moon. Is it pos-

[*Turn to Page* 130]

SKINNY

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ISAAC ASIMOV

Which winds us up for the time being, but I want to answer a question which came up in the first letter—about the pre-dating of magazines. It has to do with dealers and distributors, and the practice is that, say, when the first of December arrives, news-dealers check their shelves and send back all magazines dated December. Thus, in order to get a two-month sale period for a bi-monthly magazine, an issue which goes on sale in October must be dated December. Just how this all came about is a mystery to many people, including RAWL.

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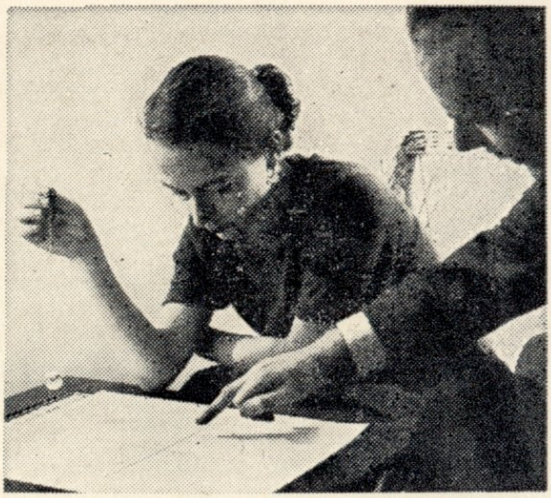

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Until recently the process of hypnotic induction was largely based on trial and error methods which succeeded mainly with subjects who were highly susceptible to hypnosis in the first place. The truth is that these highly susceptible subjects make up a very small percentage of the population. That is why amateurs and beginning hypnotists have so often been disappointed in their attempts at trance induction. Now, however, recent scientific research has developed ENTIRELY NEW METHODS that are not only sure fire in their results but quick and easy to achieve! For the first time, these new methods are presented in HOW TO HYPNOTIZE in language that you can easily and successfully follow on the very first reading!

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This book — which has been acclaimed by doctors and psychologists — is guaranteed to give you all the know-how necessary to induce the trance state in others. It not only explains the latest discoveries in hypnotic induction, but it shows step by step, move by move, exactly how to bring on the trance; how to transform the trance into deeper and still deeper states; and how to terminate the trance quickly and effectively without any dangers whatsoever. You are even given alternative methods, so that you can actually chose the one that suits you best.

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